

Council of the District of Columbia
COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY & PUBLIC SAFETY
MEMORANDUM

1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20004

TO: Nyasha Smith, Secretary of the Council
FROM: Charles Allen, Chairperson, Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety
RE: Closing Hearing Record
DATE: December 20, 2021

CA

Dear Ms. Smith,

Please find attached copies of the Hearing Notice, Agenda and Witness List, and testimony for the Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety's November 18, 2021 Public Hearing on B24-0372, the "Voter Ownership, Integrity, Choice, and Equity Amendment Act of 2021". The following witnesses testified at the hearing or submitted written testimony to the Committee:

i. Public Witnesses

1. Caleb Jackson, Legal Counsel, Voting Rights, Campaign Legal Center
2. Brian McCabe, Associate Professor, Department of Sociology, Georgetown University
3. Kathy Chiron, President, League of Women Voters D.C.
4. Akosua Ali, President, DC Branch, NAACP
5. Markus Batchelor, Public Witness
6. Philip Pannell, Public Witness
7. Jeremiah Lowery, Chair, D.C. for Democracy
8. Kesh Ladduwahetty, Public Witness
9. Jennifer Speight, Campaign Organizer, Rank the Vote D.C.
10. Makia Green, Organizing Director - D.C., Working Families Party
11. Joslyn Williams, Public Witness
12. Khalid Pitts, Executive Vice President, Policy & Programs, FairVote
13. Grace Ramsey, Co-Director, Democracy Rising
14. Susan Lerner, Executive Director, Common Cause New York
15. Chris Hughes, Policy Director, Ranked Choice Voting Resource Center
16. Whitney Quesenbery, Executive Director, Center for Civic Design
17. Sean Dugar, Executive Director, More Voice D.C.
18. Michelle Whittaker, Organizing Director, Ranked Choice Voting Maryland
19. Cynthia Terrell, Founder & Executive Director, RepresentWomen

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21. Jeanné Lewis, Public Witness
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34. Gordon-Andrew Fletcher, Chair, Ward 5 Democrats
35. Don Dinan, Ward 6 Committeeman, D.C. Democratic State Committee
36. Karim Marshall, 2nd Vice-Chair, Ward 7 Democrats
37. Harry Thomas, Jr., Ward 5 Committeeman, D.C. Democratic State Committee
38. Troy Donté Prestwood, Chair, Ward 8 Democrats
39. Timothy Thomas, Ward 5 Committeeman, D.C. Democratic State Committee
40. Tony Dugger, Chair, Black Caucus, D.C. Democratic State Committee
41. Jaqueline Castaneda, Deputy Communications Director, D.C. Latino Caucus
42. Gaby Fraser, 1st Vice President/Chair, Legislative Committee, Metropolitan Women's Democratic Club
43. Celeste Garcia, D.C. Federation of Democratic Women Representative, D.C. Democratic State Committee
44. Verna Clayborne, Executive Committee Member, D.C. Women in Politics
45. Dorothy Douglas, Public Witness

46. Alice Walker, D.C. Federation of Democratic Women Representative, D.C. Democratic State Committee
47. Dan Wedderburn, Public Witness
48. Dieter Lehmann Morales, Commissioner, ANC 1A02
49. Peter Wood, Commissioner, ANC 1C03
50. Rehana Mohammed, Commissioner, ANC 2F07
51. Christian Damiana, Commissioner, ANC 3D07
52. Ben Bergmann, Commissioner, ANC 3D08
53. Lisa Gore, Commissioner, ANC 3/4G01
54. Zach Israel, Commissioner, ANC 4D04
55. Robert Vinson Brannum, Commissioner, ANC 5E08
56. Zachary Parker, Ward 5 Representative, State Board of Education
57. Rev. Wendy Hamilton, Public Witness
58. Ankit Jain, Public Witness
59. Caroline Petti, Public Witness
60. Jose Barrios, Public Witness
61. Sam Bonar, Co-Director, Delicious Democracy
62. Brianna McGowan, Co-Director, Delicious Democracy
63. Rob Hofmann, Research Team Co-Lead, Sunrise D.C.
64. Ahmad Abu-Khalaf, Public Witness
65. Nick Sementelli, Public Witness
66. Lisa Rice, Public Witness
67. Paula Edwards, Public Witness
68. Phillip Zanders, Public Witness
69. Shirley Rivens Smith, Representative, North Woodridge Citizens Association
70. Jeannette Mobley, Public Witness
71. Melissa Littlepage, Public Witness
72. Chris Burroughs, Public Witness
73. Nat Cohen, Public Witness
74. Maddie Feldman, Chair & Founder, Georgetown Day School Voter Mobilization Initiative
75. Anna Ford, Public Witness
76. Shaila Joshi, Public Witness

77. Ava Ginsberg, Public Witness
78. Delaney McDermott, Public Witness
79. Charlie Baar, Public Witness
80. Nava Mach, Public Witness
81. Carlos McKnight, Public Witness
82. Lia Kuduk, Public Witness
83. Kush Kharod, Organizer, Sunrise DC
84. Aura Angélica, Organizer, Sunrise DC
85. Harpaul Kohli, Public Witness
86. Jamieson Davids, Hub Member, Sunrise DC
87. Samantha Delgado, Member, Sunrise DC
88. Christian Mussenden, Organizer, Sunrise DC
89. Alex Busbee, Public Witness
90. Anne Cauman, Public Witness
91. Emily Mechner, Public Witness
92. Gloria Stokes, Public Witness
93. Alex Baca, Policy Manager, Greater Greater Washington
94. Karen Zuckerstein, Public Witness
95. Lauren Spokane, Public Witness
96. Sandra “SS” Seegars, Public Witness
97. Silvia Martinez, DC Democratic National Committee Woman
98. Christopher Pearson, Member, Board of Directors, National Popular Vote
99. Michael Whelan, Public Witness
100. Phil Thomas, Chair, Ward 3 Democratic Committee
101. Jonathan Fichter, Public Witness
102. Molly Silfen, Public Witness
103. Kit Conway, Public Witness
104. Adam Chamy, Public Witness
105. Zachary Ferguson, Public Witness
106. Clark Cohen, Public Witness
107. Sara Green, Public Witness
108. Jon Samuels, Public Witness
109. Max Broad, Public Witness

110. Austin Naughton Chisholm, Public Witness
111. Jacqui Lieberman, Public Witness
112. Jason Forman, Public Witness
113. Ellie Bomstein, Public Witness
114. Brenda Barron, Public Witness
115. Gavin Baker, Public Witness
116. Doug Foote, Public Witness
117. Hugh Allen, Public Witness
118. Alex Wigmore, Public Witness
119. Laura Richards, Public Witness
120. Peter Vincent Cirincione, Public Witness
121. Martin White, Public Witness

ii. Government Witnesses

1. Monica Evans, Executive Director, Board of Elections

Council of the District of Columbia
COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY & PUBLIC SAFETY
NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20004

COUNCILMEMBER CHARLES ALLEN, CHAIRPERSON
COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY & PUBLIC SAFETY

ANNOUNCES A PUBLIC HEARING ON

**B24-0372, THE “VOTER OWNERSHIP, INTEGRITY, CHOICE, AND EQUITY
AMENDMENT ACT OF 2021”**

Thursday, November 18, 2021, 9:30 a.m. – 6 p.m.

Virtual Hearing via Zoom

To Watch Live:

<https://dccouncil.us/council-videos/>

<http://video.oct.dc.gov/DCC/jw.html>

<https://www.facebook.com/CMcharlesallen/>

On Thursday, November 18, 2021, Councilmember Charles Allen, Chairperson of the Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety, will convene a public hearing to consider Bill 24-0372, the “Voter Ownership, Integrity, Choice, and Equity Amendment Act of 2021”. The hearing will be conducted virtually via Zoom from 9:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.

The stated purpose of B24-0372, the “Voter Ownership, Integrity, Choice, and Equity Amendment Act of 2021”, is to amend the District of Columbia Election Code of 1955 to require that candidates for public office be elected using ranked choice voting, to require that District voting systems be compatible with a ranked choice ballot system, and to set a date and conditions for implementation of ranked choice voting in the District.

The Committee invites the public to provide oral and written testimony. Public witnesses seeking to provide oral testimony at the Committee’s hearing must thoroughly review the following instructions:

- Anyone wishing to provide oral testimony must email the Committee at judiciary@dccouncil.us with their name, telephone number, and if testifying on behalf of an organization, organizational affiliation and title, by the **close of business on Friday, November 12.**
- The Committee will approve witnesses’ registrations based on the total time allotted for public testimony. The Committee will also determine the order of witnesses’ testimony.

- Representatives of organizations will be allowed a maximum of five minutes for oral testimony, and individuals (and any subsequent representatives of the same organizations) will be allowed a maximum of three minutes.
- Witnesses are not permitted to yield their time to, or substitute their testimony for, the testimony of another individual or organization.
- If possible, witnesses should submit a copy of their testimony electronically in advance to judiciary@dccouncil.us.
- Witnesses who anticipate needing language interpretation are requested to inform the Committee as soon as possible, but no later than five business days before the hearing. The Committee will make every effort to fulfill timely requests; however, requests received fewer than five business days before the hearing may not be fulfilled.

For witnesses who are unable to testify at the hearing, written statements will be made part of the official record. Copies of written statements should be emailed to the Committee at judiciary@dccouncil.us. **The record will close at the end of the business day on Friday, December 3.**

**Council of the District of Columbia
COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY & PUBLIC SAFETY
AGENDA & WITNESS LIST
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20004**

**COUNCILMEMBER CHARLES ALLEN, CHAIRPERSON
COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY & PUBLIC SAFETY**

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**B24-0372, the “Voter Ownership, Integrity, Choice, and Equity
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AGENDA AND WITNESS LIST

I. CALL TO ORDER

II. OPENING REMARKS

III. WITNESS TESTIMONY

i. Public Witnesses

Panel 1

1. Caleb Jackson, Legal Counsel, Voting Rights, Campaign Legal Center
2. Brian McCabe, Associate Professor, Department of Sociology, Georgetown University
3. Kathy Chiron, President, League of Women Voters D.C.
4. Akosua Ali, President, DC Branch, NAACP
5. Matthew Hanson, Chief of Staff, D.C. Action
6. Markus Batchelor, Public Witness

7. Philip Pannell, Public Witness
8. Jeremiah Lowery, Chair, D.C. for Democracy
9. Kesh Ladduwahetty, Public Witness
10. Nicholas Fleming, Member, Rank the Vote D.C.
11. Makia Green, Organizing Director - D.C., Working Families Party
12. David Alpert, Public Witness
13. Joslyn Williams, Public Witness

Panel 2

14. Khalid Pitts, Executive Vice President, Policy & Programs, FairVote
15. Grace Ramsey, Co-Director, Democracy Rising
16. Susan Lerner, Executive Director, Common Cause New York
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18. Whitney Quesenbery, Executive Director, Center for Civic Design
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25. Kymone Freeman, Public Witness
26. Nimit Sawhney, CEO, Voatz

Panel 3

27. Charles Wilson, At-Large Committeeman/Chair, D.C. Democratic State Committee
28. Chioma Iwuoha, At-Large Committeewoman, D.C. Democratic State Committee
29. Dave Donaldson, At-Large Committeeman, D.C. Democratic State Committee
30. James Bubar, At-Large Committeeman, D.C. Democratic State Committee
31. Keith Hasan-Towery, At-Large Committeeman, D.C. Democratic State Committee

32. Alan Karnofsky, Add On Committeeman/Recording Secretary, D.C. Democratic State Committee
33. Dionna Maria Lewis, Add On Committeewoman, D.C. Democratic State Committee
34. Dorinda White, Add On Committeewoman, D.C. Democratic State Committee
35. Kevin Chavous, Add On Committeeman, D.C. Democratic State Committee
36. Matt LaFortune, Add On Committeeman, D.C. Democratic State Committee
37. Ronnie Edwards, Add On Committeeman, D.C. Democratic State Committee
38. Ruth Pagani, Add On Committeewoman/Treasurer, D.C. Democratic State Committee

Panel 4

39. Anita Bellamy Shelton, Ward 1 Committeewoman, D.C. Democratic State Committee
40. Stanley Mayes, Ward 1 Committeeman, D.C. Democratic State Committee
41. John Fanning, Ward 2 Committeeman, D.C. Democratic State Committee
42. Linda Gray, Ward 4 Committeewoman/Vice Chair, D.C. Democratic State Committee
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49. David Meadows, Ward 6 Committeeman, D.C. Democratic State Committee
50. Don Dinan, Ward 6 Committeeman, D.C. Democratic State Committee
51. Wendell Felder, Chair, Ward 7 Democrats
52. Dorothy Douglas, Ward 7 Committeewoman, D.C. Democratic State Committee
53. Troy Donté Prestwood, Chair, Ward 8 Democrats
54. Wanda Lockridge, Ward 8 Committeewoman, D.C. Democratic State Committee
55. Regina Pixley, Ward 8 Committeewoman, D.C. Democratic State Committee

Panel 5

56. Devon Lesesne, Executive Vice President, D.C. Young Democrats
57. Tony Dugger, Chair, Black Caucus, D.C. Democratic State Committee
58. Jennifer Hara, Vice Chair, Asian American and Pacific Islanders Caucus, D.C. Democratic State Committee
59. Rev. George Holmes, Chair, Religious Council, D.C. Democratic State Committee
60. Jaqueline Castaneda, Deputy Communications Director, D.C. Latino Caucus
61. Alice Walker, D.C. Federation of Democratic Women Representative, D.C. Democratic State Committee
62. Gaby Fraser, 1st Vice President/Chair, Legislative Committee, Metropolitan Women's Democratic Club
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66. Dieter Lehmann Morales, Commissioner, ANC 1A02
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70. Ben Bergmann, Commissioner, ANC 3D08
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74. Zachary Parker, Ward 5 Representative, State Board of Education

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80. Rob Hofmann, Research Team Co-Lead, Sunrise D.C.

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88. Josh Resnick, Public Witness

Panel 8

89. Shirley Rivens Smith, Representative, North Woodridge Citizens Association
90. Villareal Johnson, II, Vice President, Hillcrest Community Civic Association
91. Jeannette Mobley, Public Witness
92. Lia Kuduk. Public Witness
93. Angel Henriquez, Public Witness
94. Melissa Littlepage, Public Witness
95. Kit Conway, Public Witness
96. Anise Jenkins, Executive Director, Stand up! for Democracy in DC (Free DC)
97. Spencer Gopaul, Public Witness
98. Keisha Hamilton, Manager, Perf3ction Band
99. Ty Hobson-Powell, Director of Policy, Concerned Citizens DC
100. Melvin Stackhouse, Representative, No Slide Zone
101. Alexandra Siegel, Public Witness
102. Lenwood Johnson, Public Witness
103. Chris Burroughs, Public Witness
104. Nat Cohen, Public Witness

Panel 9

105. Maddie Feldman, Chair & Founder, Georgetown Day School Voter Mobilization Initiative
106. Anna Ford, Public Witness
107. Shaila Joshi, Public Witness
108. Ava Ginsberg, Public Witness

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110. Charlie Baar, Public Witness
111. Nava Mach, Public Witness
112. Carlos McKnight, Public Witness

Panel 10

113. Robert Hofmann, Abolition Team Co-Lead, Sunrise DC
114. Jennifer Speight, Campaign Organizer, Rank the Vote DC
115. Kush Kharod, Organizer, Sunrise DC
116. Harpaul Kohli, Public Witness
117. Trey Ames, Public Witness
118. Sam Farooqui, Member, Sunrise DC
119. Hal Ginsberg, Public Witness
120. Jamieson Davids, Hub Member, Sunrise DC
121. Selma Khalil, Political Power Co-Lead, Sunrise DC
122. Christian Mussenden, Organizer, Sunrise DC
123. Aura Angélica, Organizer, Sunrise DC

ii. Government Witness

1. Monica Evans, Executive Director, Board of Elections

IV. ADJOURNMENT



November 18, 2021

Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety
Council of the District of Columbia
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20004

RE: Campaign Legal Center's Support of the Voter Ownership, Integrity, Choice, and Equity Amendment Act of 2021

Dear Chair Charles Allen and Members of the D.C. Council Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety:

My name is Caleb Jackson and I work as a voting rights attorney here in D.C. at Campaign Legal Center, a nonpartisan organization working to advance democracy through law by fighting for every American's rights to responsive government and a fair opportunity to participate in and affect the democratic process. I am here today to testify in favor of the VOICE Act, which if passed, would implement Ranked Choice Voting here in our beloved Washington D.C.

Ranked Choice Voting gives voters the option to rank candidates for office in order of preference, while continuing to allow those who only want to vote for one candidate to do so. If no candidate receives the majority of the vote initially, an instant runoff process begins and the election is decided as soon as one candidate receives a majority of the votes. Under this system, candidates must campaign for the first, second, and third choice of voters, which encourages more inclusive campaign techniques and ensures that the winner earns support from a broad coalition of voters.

Studies have shown that Ranked Choice Voting increases the number of candidates of color and women candidates in elections.¹ A study by FairVote showed that the share of minorities and women running for office increased from 17% to 26% in municipal elections in California under Ranked Choice Voting.²

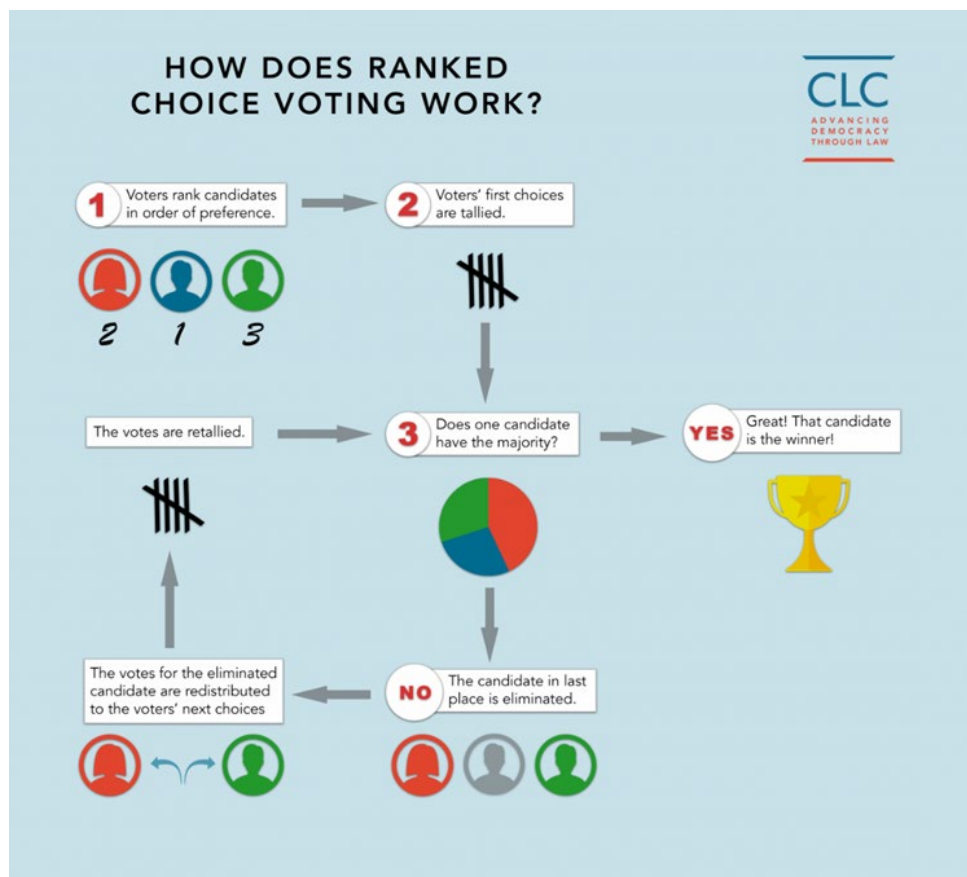
Ranked Choice Voting increases the likelihood that minority communities of interest can maximize their chances of electing their candidates of choice, providing more choice for voters and minimizing vote splitting. In fact, in New York City's recent election – the city's first under

¹ FairVote. May 2021. Ranked Choice Voting Elections Benefit Candidates and Voters of Color, https://www.fairvote.org/report_rcv_benefits_candidates_and_voters_of_color.

² John, S., Smith, H., & Zack, E. August 2018. The alternative vote: Do changes in single-member voting systems affect descriptive representation of women and minorities?, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0261379417304006>.

Ranked Choice Voting - voters elected just the second Black Mayor in the city's 150-year plus mayoral election history and the first ever majority women City Council.

Ranked Choice Voting also removes incentives for negative campaigning. Because voters rank their top candidates, campaigns are encouraged to focus on convincing the electorate that they are the right choice, rather than convincing voters that their opponents are the wrong choice. Nearly 50 jurisdictions across the country have already implemented or are preparing to implement Ranked Choice Voting, including Minneapolis, Minnesota; Oakland, California; New York City; the state of Maine; the state of Alaska; and our neighbors in Takoma Park, Maryland.



While Ranked Choice Voting may be a new way to vote, it is not unrecognizable to most D.C. voters. D.C. parents already rank the schools they hope their children will be able to attend under D.C.'s school placement lottery. Further, the VOICE Act includes a public education component which will ensure that all voters in all 8 Wards understand how to vote under the Ranked Choice Voting system.

In 2020, Campaign Legal Center supported the passage of Ranked Choice Voting in Alaska and this year, we support the passage of Ranked Choice Voting in what we hope to see become the 51st state – Washington, D.C.

Feel free to contact Caleb Jackson by email at cjackson@campaignlegal.org with any questions or to discuss Campaign Legal Center's support of the VOICE Act in more detail.

Sincerely,

Caleb Jackson
Legal Counsel, Voting Rights
Campaign Legal Center
1101 14th Street NW Suite 400
Washington, DC 20005
cjackson@campaignlegalcenter.org
(202) 736-2200



GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY

Georgetown College
Department of Sociology

November 17, 2021

Councilmember Allen, Councilmember Henderson and Members of the Judiciary Committee,

My name is Brian McCabe and I am an Associate Professor of Sociology at Georgetown University. Recently, I co-authored a report on DC's new public financing system, the Fair Elections program. We find that the program succeeded in drawing more donors into the political process and encouraging candidates to focus on small-dollar donors. However, it did little to rectify inequalities in participation across neighborhoods.

In future elections, I expect the program to encourage *more candidates will run for office* – a fact that merits consideration in our discussion today. With lower barriers to entry, potential candidates who have historically been excluded from elective office because of a campaign finance system that requires massive fundraising will be able to participate.

The Fair Elections program improved on an undemocratic campaign finance system; the VOICE Act seeks to do the same for an undemocratic electoral system. Any system in which the Democratic candidate wins a low-turnout primary and is virtually guaranteed a win in a general election is undemocratic. (In 2018, Mayor Bowser won the Democratic primary with the support of only 62,000 voters – only about 1 in 8 registered voters – and then had only token opposition in the general election.) Similarly, a general election for an At-Large Council seat, in which candidates regularly win with far less than fifty percent of the vote, is undemocratic. (Last year, Councilmember Henderson received the support of only 79,000 voters – fewer than 1 out of 6 registered voters.)

Rank choice voting is one alternative to this electoral system, but it has limitations.

- First, rank choice voting may be confusing to voters, as the recent experience in New York City shows. It requires a reframing of the way voters think about selecting candidates in local elections. It requires a massive education campaign (and the grace of a couple election cycles) before it will be fully understood by the electorate.

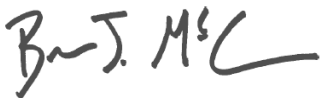
- This type of system can be cumbersome for voters, too. It asks voters to sift through the campaign material of more candidates and rank them simultaneously in multiple elections. If we used Rank Choice Voting in the upcoming 2022 election, each voter would be asked to rank citywide candidates for Mayor, Attorney General, Council Chair, At-Large Council, At-Large State Board of Education and their ANC. In some Wards, voters will be asked to rank Ward candidates for Council and State Board of Education. Just in these local elections, it is feasible that a voter would be expected to participate in up to eight local races – and rank up to forty candidates – in a single election cycle. That might be thrilling for those of us that care deeply about DC politics and pay close attention, but it will be overwhelming – and potentially discouraging – for most Washingtonians.

Before moving forward, the Council should consider an alternative reform – a top-two system, ideally paired with the discontinuation of partisan elections in the District. In a top-two system, all candidates participate in a primary, typically without regard to party affiliation. The top two candidates move on to the general election. This type of system ensures that voters in the general election have a real choice on Election Day in November, rather than simply rubber-stamping the choice of the Democratic primary voters. It is commonly used in cities. It similarly ensures that candidates earn the trust of at least half of voters on Election Day – a goal shared by Rank Choice Voting.

A top-two system is best implemented in non-partisan elections. Many cities, including Los Angeles, Chicago, San Francisco and Detroit, have non-partisan local elections. Creating non-partisan elections in the District will emphasize policy choices to voters, rather than relying on party affiliation.

While Rank Choice Voting is certainly gaining popularity these days, I would encourage the Council to consider both systems before picking a new electoral system.

Thank you for your consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brian J. McCabe". The signature is stylized with a large "B" and "M".

Brian J. McCabe
Associate Professor



23 November 2021

The League of Women Voters of the District of Columbia is pleased to present this testimony in support of Rank Choice Voting for DC Elections.

In 2015, our League conducted a Study¹ on Rank Choice Voting which led to our strong support for RCV. We are proud that this early report on RCV has been used over the years by several other organizations working around the country on RCV.

We are excited to see such widespread support for RCV on the DC Council.

We believe the VOICE Act has the potential to empower District voters by replacing the existing plurality system with RCV. With RCV, we will elect officials who will have been elected by most of the voters² and therefore will be more responsive to the entire electorate rather than the small percentage now required to win. Campaigning will be more robust, full of diverse points of view and centered on issues. Candidates will run and voters will support them knowing their voice will be heard without any accusation of being spoilers. There won't be that temptation to get other candidates to drop out of the race or for voters to abandon their first choice. RCV gives voters a significantly greater chance of having their individual vote impact the outcome. The choices of voters whose favorite didn't win, will be counted until one candidate has a majority - it is possible, therefore, that a voter's second or even third or fourth choice may actually be instrumental in selecting the winner of the election.

¹ The League of Women Voters of the District of Columbia, "Local Study: Election Systems", <https://www.lwvdc.org/election-systems-study>.

² 2014 election results: 2 at large seats 31.36% (Bonds) and 15.14% (Silverman). DC Board of Elections, "General Election 2014 - Certified Results", https://electionresults.dcboc.org/election_results/2014-General-Election.

Jurisdictions that employ RCV such as Minneapolis³, New York⁴, St Paul, Oakland and San Francisco⁵ have shown that RCV has led to more civic engagement. A paper published earlier this year by Juelich and Coll found youth turnout in RCV cities increased compared to non-RCV cities, suggesting campaign civility and mobilization may have contributed to the boost.⁶

Let me state again: LWVDC supports RCV for DC elections!

Nonetheless we do have a few suggestions to strengthen the VOICE act as it is currently written.

Providing a limit of five rankings may stem from the goal of ensuring usability. However, we'd like for you to consider the greater of a minimum of five (5) or 50% (rounding up) of the number of candidates for races with more than ten (10) candidates. For races with less than 5 candidates all would be available to rank.

We recommend the BOE, learning with industry experts and resources, as well as in partnership with our community and Council, and in a timely fashion, will do due diligence in researching ballot design.

We continue our strong desire to work with the BOE on voter education and engagement with the understanding that voter turnout is not part of their

³ A 2020 study by Eamon McGinn found ranked choice voting caused a 9.6 percentage point increase in turnout in Minneapolis-St. Paul. The impact was greater in precincts with higher poverty rates. Eamon McGinn, "Rating Rankings: Effect of Instant Run-off Voting on Participation and Civility", 8 October 2020, <http://eamonmcginn.com.s3-website-ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/>

⁴ In the 2021 NYC mayoral election featuring ranked choice voting with an instant runoff, 85% of voters had a say in the final result. Additionally, having an instant runoff saved the city a significant sum, \$15 million. Common Cause of New York, 14 July 2021, "Major Takeaways from New York City's First Ranked Choice Election", <http://readme.readmedia.com/Major-Takeaways-from-New-York-Citys-First-Ranked-Choice-Election/18037730>.

⁵ More San Franciscans participated in the 2018 RCV mayoral election than the non-RCV primaries for Governor and U.S. Senator. (There were 250,868 votes cast for the mayoral race, compared to 244,137 and 237,261 votes for Governor and Senator respectively.) FairVote.org, "Voter Turnout and Participation", https://www.fairvote.org/research_rcvvoterturnout.

⁶ Courtney L. Juelich and Joseph A. Coll, June 2021, "Ranked Choice Voting and Youth Voter Turnout: The Roles of Campaign Civility and Candidate Contact", <https://www.cogitatiopress.com/politicsandgovernance/article/view/3914/3914>.

remit. The timing of and language used in preparatory instructions to voters and wording of ballot instructions is critical to the success of any election. Again we will continue to work with the BOE to help tailor material to DC Voters.

We encourage flexibility in how this is structured in this legislation. The League's award winning, non-partisan voter information site, vote411.org, will include RCV information in English and Spanish. We have already set up an Inside Voter Info Phone line in our DC DOC and we expect the equivalent to be in the BOP so our incarcerated folks will be able to have their voting questions answered.

DC Council, the Board of Elections and the community leaders working on this initiative are a great team to work with to prepare for the implementation of RCV for DC. We encourage the Board of Elections to begin investigation of implementation of RCV even while we're only in this phase of the legislative process.

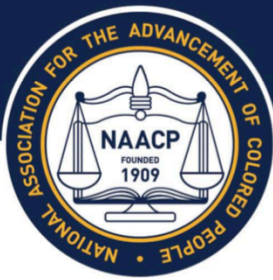
The LWVDC applauds the Council's efforts to bring RCV to our District. We are pleased to offer a Ranked Choice Voting 101 Presentation to all interested community leaders along with a demonstration to help folks see how RCV works firsthand.

As a century-old, trusted nonpartisan organization with the mission to Empower Voters and Defend Democracy, LWVDC welcomes working with you for increased voter participation for the people of what we hope will soon be Douglass Commonwealth.

Kathy P Chiron
President, LWVDC

Erica Frazier
Board of Trustees, LWVDC

[LWVDC 1100 15th Street NW, 4th floor, Washington, DC 20009](#)



NAACP *National Association For The Advancement Of Colored People*

Washington, DC Branch

1000 U Street, NW • Suite 100 • Washington, DC 20001

**NAACP DC Branch Testimony
Council of the District of Columbia
Judiciary and Public Safety and the Committee of the Whole**

Thursday, November 18, 2021

B24-0372 the “Voter Ownership, Integrity, Choice, and Equity Amendment Act of 2021”

Chairman Allen and Members of the Committee, thank you for holding this hearing. I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony regarding this legislation. My name is Akosua Ali and I am the President of the NAACP Washington, DC Branch. The NAACP is the nation’s oldest and largest civil rights organization. For 112 years, the NAACP has fought for civil rights, economic empowerment, civic engagement and political action.

The NAACP fights for the empowerment of Black voices to represent and advocate for Black communities. The NAACP Washington, DC Branch is extremely proud of the rich history of the District of Columbia giving rise to strong Black leaders that have led this city in transformational changes across the landscape of our nation. The District’s iconic, history of Black empowerment from the DC Emancipation Act of April 16, 1862, founding of Howard University in 1867, founding of M Street High School in 1970, later named Dunbar High School and the Home Rule Charter of 1974, all led to a legacy of Black elected officials supporting political and cultural empowerment. The District has a rich history of strong, Black elected leaders fighting for civil rights and economic empowerment.

Once known as “Chocolate City,” when African-Americans were 70% of the District’s population in the 1970s. Today, gentrification, skyrocketing property values, insufficient low-income housing, limited real-affordable housing and limited high-quality public education options have resulted in the Black population dwindling down to less than 45%.


Amidst the changing demographics of this city, the NAACP promotes civic engagement and political action through full and open elections procedures. African-Americans have fought long and hard for the right to vote, from the civil rights movement when voters were subjected to dogs, firehoses and police violence for the right to vote. Today, we owe it to our history to ensure the voting process is simple and best-represents the voices of our community by maximizing voter participation and voter turnout among African-American voters.

Historically, African-American elected officials fight to uplift the conditions facing the Black community. From Walter Washington as the first African-American Mayor of Washington, DC to Sharon Pratt as the first African-American Women Mayor of Washington, DC, we embody a legacy of Black voters electing majority African-American elected officials to build institutional power and address the racial justice disparities impacting Black communities.

The NAACP has not agreed on a position on Rank Choice Voting, but we do agree that civic engagement is a civil rights issue and all votes must be counted to ensure voters are represented with leadership that represents them. Today and always, the NAACP advocates to ensure all Black votes are counted and all Black voters are protected. Ultimately, we stand for the representation of Black voices that fight for the upliftment and advancement of the Black community.

On behalf of the Washington, DC Branch of the NAACP, we thank you for allowing us to testify today. Thank you!

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Akosua Ali".

Akosua Ali
President
NAACP DC Branch

Hello Chairman Allen and members of the Judiciary Committee. I'm here to testify in support of the VOICE Act and ranked choice voting. I am a long time Ward 8 community activist and a leader in the DC Democratic Party. I know that ranked voting reflects our Democratic values of inclusion, equity, and choice. And as someone who trusts science and data, I have been a big proponent of ranked choice voting for many years after seeing how it can address a number of problems in our electoral system and help elect more women and people of color.

I want to focus today on how ranked choice voting makes sure candidates have to earn a real majority of the vote in order to win. *The following is an excerpt from my column from August 2021 in East of the River DC News:*

In 2000 and 2016 the Democratic presidential candidates who won the popular votes lost in the Electoral College and George Bush (the son) and Donald Trump became the presidents respectively. That has happened five times in United States presidential elections and since 1824 there has been a national debate about abolishing the Electoral College.

At the local level, we in DC have witnessed candidates who have won with slim pluralities and with DC having no runoff elections they assumed office with no mandates. In 1994 then Ward 8 Councilmember Marion Barry was elected to a fourth term as mayor and the next year Ward 8 had a special election to fill his Council vacancy.

There were 21 candidates in that 1995 special election. 11 percent of the voters turned out and the winning candidate prevailed by a margin of two votes. The next year in the regular election that incumbent Ward 8 Councilmember was defeated by the candidate who came in second in the previous year.

Ward 8 has a history of multi-candidate elections and winners with small pluralities. In the 2011 special election for Ward 8 State Board of Education Member, there were nine candidates, 6 percent of the voters turned out and winning candidate received 33% of the votes cast. In the 2014 special election for Ward 8 State Board of Education Member, there were three candidates, 2.6 percent of the voters turned out and the winner received 48% of the votes cast. That incumbent was defeated in the 2016 regular election.

In 2015 there was a special Ward 8 Council election to fill the vacancy left by Marion Barry's death. There were 13 candidates, 14 percent of the voter turned out and the winner received 27% of the votes cast. That incumbent councilmember was defeated for reelection the next year by the second-place finisher in the 2015 special election.

When candidates win with slim margins and without a majority of the votes, they have no mandates, the community does not unify behind them and the opposition to their reelections begin the day they are sworn in. Some community activists and leaders are not even interested in working with them or hoping that they do a good job for the people. They simply must be defeated because they won narrow victories.

There are jurisdictions throughout the nation that mandate a runoff election be held when no candidates receive a majority of the votes cast. DC does not have runoff elections but recently

At-large Councilmember Christina Henderson introduced legislation that will establish Rank Choice Voting (RCV), also known as Instant Runoff Voting.

Rank Choice Voting allows voters to rank candidates by preference, meaning they can submit ballots that list not only their first-choice candidate, but also their second, third and so on. If a candidate does not win a majority (more than 50 percent) on the first count, then the candidate with the least votes is eliminated and that candidate's ballots are redistributed to the second choice candidate.

If a candidate still does not have a majority of the vote, the next lowest candidate is eliminated and the second-choice candidates of these votes are calculated. This continues until a candidate wins over 50 percent.

I highly commend her for introducing the legislation because it demonstrates what a deeply principled politician she is. Last year in the general election Ms. Henderson won 14.8 percent of the votes in a 24-candidate race, which qualified her for the second at-large council seat.

Most politicians and elected officials would be satisfied and supportive of a process that helped them get over the hump. But not Christina Henderson. After the election, she said that she was uncomfortable with having won with such a small number of votes and that she would introduce Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) legislation. She is a woman of her word. Put her in the Smithsonian.

I have been a supporter of RCV for over 20 years because not only does it guarantee that the winner of an election would receive a majority of the votes but it is a process that encourages minority candidates and injects civility in elections. When candidates are ranked by voters, the slogan that "every vote counts" takes on an even deeper concrete mathematical meaning. Also, if you are a candidate who wants to be a voter's second choice, it helps if you not engage in negative campaigning.

On June 22nd of this year in the primary elections, New York City used Ranked Choice Voting for the first time and according to the pollsters the voters loved the process. The winner of the Democratic primary for mayor is Eric Adams, who if elected this November will be the second African American mayor of New York City.

Councilmember Henderson's RCV bill has been co-sponsored by six of her Council colleagues and I hope and pray that the majority of the Councilmembers hang tough in their support of this needed progressive electoral reform.

Realizing that outside of DC's circle of political activists, few residents are familiar or even heard of RCV, I urge everyone to visit fairvote.org. Also, community organizations should place discussions of RCV on their meeting agendas. When New York City adopted RCV there was a massive public education campaign leading up to the election. The voters of DC deserve the same.

Philip Pannell

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*Philip Pannell is a long time Ward 8 community activist. He can be contacted at philippannell@comcast.net.*

Link to column here:

<https://eastoftheriverdcnews.com/2021/08/10/give-us-ranked-choice-voting/>



Testimony of Jeremiah Lowery, DC for Democracy  
before the Committee on the Judiciary & Public Safety  
at the November 18th, 2021 Hearing on the  
B24-0372, the “Voter Ownership, Integrity, Choice, and Equity  
Amendment Act of 2021”

Chairman Allen, Councilmembers & staff, my name is Jeremiah Lowery, and I am the Chair of DC for Democracy. I am testifying today on behalf of our 700-plus voting members in favor of B24-0372, the “Voter Ownership, Integrity, Choice, and Equity Amendment Act of 2021”.

**I would like to state it clearly for the record: ranked choice voting is a racial justice issue.**

Throughout my years organizing in Washington, D.C., I have heard countless times from local political strategists that “this or that woman of color should drop out of the race for DC Council because there are too many on the ballot and they will split the vote between them” or “there are too many candidates voicing their support for marginalized residents of color in the DC Council race, one of them has to drop out or else the candidate that does not have the interests of marginalized residents of color in mind wins”.

Those scenarios are completely unacceptable but that all can change if Washington, DC adopts a ranked choice voting system. Through ranked choice voting, D.C. would have a system that can accommodate multiple candidates of a range of the same or different ideologies, and if the preference of the voters is to pick a candidate whose voice reflects the will of residents to uplift all residents then that would be reflected in the results.

**Ranked choice voting not only prevents pigeonholing of candidates when voting, it will also change how candidates campaign.**

As the Chair of D.C for Democracy, I will often times have conversations with candidates and they will say something to the nature of “the other candidates in the race have the support of low-income black seniors, so I won’t focus on them because that’s not my base” or “that



candidate has connections to public housing residents, so I will focus on the wealthier parts of the city to develop a base of support”.

With ranked choice voting all voters will potentially become a part of a candidates base, and going forward it could be a strategic mistake to not campaign and cultivate the vote of marginalized residents in Washington, DC.

If candidates campaign in a way that requires them to listen to a broad range of voices, that could potentially lead to more elected officials who seek to listen and develop policies where everyone's needs are universally met and not a small segment of voting constituents.

**To restate these points concisely:**

- ★ Candidates of different backgrounds can feel comfortable running without the pressures of being pigeonholing and wondering whether they should drop out and end their participation in our electoral system to potentially prevent a split in the voter's preference.
- ★ Candidates will work to hear from a border base of voters, resulting in public policies that reflect a constituency's wants, needs, and expectations.

**Ranked choice voting Builds Bridges**

Candidates' lived experience is important and essential to connecting with voters' and developing policies that uplift marginalized residents. However, oftentimes during campaign season, a candidates' lived experience becomes a reason to personally attack them.

For example, if a candidate from a low-income or working-class background has broken the law due to the criminalization of poverty laws in America, but paid their debt to society and has worked to become a better person, our still current political atmosphere encourages other candidates to focus on and highlight that candidates' past instead of focusing on policy agreements that end crimes of poverty of America.

The other candidates are able to attack that candidate for their past mistakes because they feel like that candidates' base of supporters aren't needed to achieve an election victory.

Ranked choice voting changes that. Ranked choice voting will lead to a system that focuses more on bridge building during election season instead of divisive bridge burning, which would create a more welcoming atmosphere for more candidates of different backgrounds who want to run for office.

Black feminist and political activist, Frances M. Beale stated that “to live for the revolution means taking on the more difficult commitment of changing our day-to-day life patterns.”

If D.C. wants to develop into a place where everyone who lives here is able to thrive here, it must first transform our current voting system to make it more reflective of the voices of its residents.

Let's do the hard work of educating all residents about ranked voice voting (because investment in education is important) and let's implement it soon after. And let's do that hard work today. Thank you.

Jeremiah Lowery

Testimony of Kesh Ladduwahetty  
before the Committee on the Judiciary & Public Safety  
regarding the  
“Voter Ownership, Integrity, Choice, and Equity Amendment Act of 2021” (B24-0372)  
November 18, 2021

Chairperson Allen and Councilmembers, thank you for holding this hearing. My name is Kesh Ladduwahetty. I am an immigrant, a DC resident of 32 years, a registered Democrat, and a grassroots activist. I am here today to raise my voice in strong support of the VOICE Act.

Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) is a much-needed reform to ensure that our elections satisfy a basic principle of democracy: that our representatives are elected by a majority of voters. The absence of RCV in local elections has led to multiple violations of this basic principle. The chart below shows the 12 DC Councilmembers and Mayors who have been elected since 2010 with less than majority support in either a special election or the Democratic primary that is the decisive election in DC. Three Councilmembers won with about 30% support or less. The problem is partly due to the large number of candidates on the ballot, longstanding feature of DC elections. But even races with as few as 3 candidates have this problem. The fact that DC voters are limited to a single vote is a serious flaw in our electoral system that harms DC voters.

In a city where the majority of voters are Black and brown, that harm is borne primarily by voters of color. A [report](#) published by New America this month that conducted a systematic overview of research about RCV concluded that racial and ethnic minority groups were more likely to win under RCV because vote-splitting was reduced and candidates did a better job of appealing to voters outside their traditional base<sup>1</sup>.

Ranking the vote is also simple and intuitive. Thousands of DCPS families rank their school preferences when they participate in the school lottery. According to the New America report, “Survey data consistently show that voters are perfectly capable of ranking. The overwhelming majority of voters experiencing a ranked-choice voting election, even for the first time, say they understand how it works.”<sup>2</sup>

Based on what I have learned about RCV and seeing the diverse community leaders who are here today testifying in support, I am confident that the VOICE Act both improves our democracy and promotes racial equity. Racial equity is a central goal of the social justice campaigns that I -- along with many others who are testifying in support of the VOICE Act --

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<sup>1</sup> [“What We Know About Ranked Choice Voting”](#) Lee Drutman and Maresa Strano (November 2021), p. 63.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 16.

have championed: campaigns to stop evictions, raise the minimum wage, provide paid family leave and paid sick days for DC workers, provide public financing for campaigns. If I believed that the VOICE Act in any way reduced the power of Black and brown voters, I would not be here today testifying for it.

As with any change to election procedures, it is essential that voters become comfortable with the new system. Therefore, I am very glad to see that the VOICE Act includes a public education element. It is essential that it be generously funded and implemented in partnership with organizations that have established relationships to target populations, especially seniors. One way to ensure that input is to have the legislation specify the establishment of a community advisory group that includes representatives of target populations to work with the Board of Elections to design and implement the public education effort.

The current legislation specifies that the voter education campaign “Be designed in consultation with organizations that have experience with providing voter education for ranked-choice voting, with preference given to organizations based in the District.” (line 144 - 146). Given that there are very few organizations that meet all of these criteria, this language should be amended. BOE should consult with organizations that are expert in RCV AND community organizations that have established relationships with target populations. These two types of organizations should work collaboratively with BOE to educate the public.

Thank you.

## Chart

**DC Council Elections 2010 - 2020 where winning candidates received less than 50% of the vote.** Candidates receiving less than 35% are highlighted.

| #  | Election                | Seat             | Number of candidates | Percentage of vote by winning candidate |
|----|-------------------------|------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| 1  | 2020 Democratic Primary | Ward 2 Council   | 8                    | 28.38%                                  |
| 2  | 2020 Democratic Primary | Ward 7 Council   | 6                    | 45.43%                                  |
| 3  | 2018 Democratic Primary | Ward 1 Council   | 4                    | 48.28%                                  |
| 4  | 2016 Democratic Primary | At-Large Council | 3                    | 42.72%                                  |
| 5  | 2015 Special Election   | Ward 8 Council   | 13                   | 26.87%                                  |
| 6  | 2015 Special Election   | Ward 4 Council   | 13                   | 42.82%                                  |
| 7  | 2014 Democratic Primary | Mayor            | 8                    | 43.38%                                  |
| 8  | 2013 Special Election   | At-Large Council | 7                    | 31.72%                                  |
| 9  | 2012 Special Election   | Ward 5 Council   | 12                   | 43.58%                                  |
| 10 | 2012 Democratic Primary | At-Large Council | 4                    | 41.88%                                  |
| 11 | 2012 Democratic Primary | Ward 7 Council   | 6                    | 42.38%                                  |
| 12 | 2011 Special Election   | At-Large Council | 9                    | 28.92%                                  |

[Source: DC Board of Elections](#)

*Note: General elections for At-Large Council are not included because BOE reports percentages of votes, rather than ballots. Since a large number of ballots include two votes, the percentages are misleading. No other elections (SBOE, ANC, etc.) were considered.*

Good Morning DC and all persons wanting to create a society where all voices are heard. I am Kelsye Adams, Dunbar Alumni, african american cultural organizer, political influencer and co producer of dc's largest gogo rally moechella. I am the ED of LLGG x founder of mambo connection, both amplifying the voice of dc culture and the use of the culture to push political agendas.

I'm speaking today to ask the Committee and the DC Council to **give voters more choice, voice, and community power** by passing the VOICE Act.

My people, BLACK people can make decisions very strategically if given the proper guidance and ample opportunity. Black people UNDERSTAND how to rank their choices, and the data from [NYC](#) PROVES that when voters of all races, ages, and backgrounds tried a ranked voting system: they understood it, used it, and liked it AND IT WORKED!

Black people can rank their choices, we understand, WE ARE ELITE. It's natural and we do it everyday. We navigate a racist world that was not built for us and an America set up against us. Our current voting system was not built for us and has all sorts of systemic hurdles in place to reduce our power and our voice, like a lack of DC Statehood for. We've changed the game before, we can change the game again.

It makes more sense for Black people to rank because our city is changing and we need to change the system to preserve Black and Native Washingtonian voting power, especially because we often see multiple Black candidates running for office and splitting the vote.

The data doesn't lie - the VOICE Act will help validate more women and people of color to run for office and help Black folks continue to win in a rapidly gentrifying city. My message is simple and clear: PASS THE VOICE ACT!

The data doesn't lie - the VOICE Act will help validate more women and people of color to run for office and help Black folks continue to win in a rapidly gentrifying city. My message is simple and clear: PASS THE VOICE ACT!

Re: My DC Council Testimony in support of Rank the Vote

Greetings

My name is Kymone Freeman, angry Black man in therapy, and co-founder of We Act Radio who just celebrated our 10th anniversary last week. My pronouns are me / we. As a media professional for the past decade, I wanted to share with you some of the nefarious claims against Ranked Choice Voting that have appeared in corporate media. Harvey Mansfield, who is 90 years old, wrote in the Wall Street Journal published July 7, 2021 that is owned by right-wing Fox News founder Rupert Murdoch, who's White Supremacy sympathizing media outlet denies even the existence of Voter Suppression no less, went on to claim that "The woke left wants to vote twice."

Hans von Spakovsky and J. Adams wrote an article for the Heritage Foundation published August 23, 2019 that claimed "Ranked choice voting is a scheme to disconnect elections from issues and allow candidates with marginal support from voters to win." I would like to make everyone here aware that Paul Weyrich, credited as the "father" of the right-wing movement and co-founder of the Heritage Foundation was famously quoted in a 1980 video produced by People For the American Way: "Now many of our Christians have what I call the goo-goo syndrome — good government. They want everybody to vote. I don't want everybody to vote. Elections are not won by a majority of people, they never have been from the beginning of our country and they are not now. As a matter of fact, our leverage in the elections quite candidly goes up as the voting populace goes down."

Now I have lived in America all my life and I have been Black for a longtime, but the more things change, the more they stay the same and I believe that include's the Heritage Foundation's strategy. But the most insulting notion critical of Ranked Choice Voting that I came across in my research was an article written in the Queens Daily Eagle, a popular local NYC paper, entitled Ranked Choice Voting Would Fail Immigrants and Communities of Color.



Adrienne Adams, I. Daneek Miller and Francisco Moya made the claim that “RCV is an unusual and confusing electoral system that would ask voters to select tiers of preference for candidates running for various elected offices.”

Translation: people of color are too stupid to understand all of this. So let me break it down for you. We currently have an upcoming mayoral race. The incumbent is a popular establishment candidate but there is a growing opposition. Let’s say our beloved Mayor has 40% of DC Voter’s support. There is 60% out there willing to support the opposition. But instead of there being one single challenger, you have Robert White, Trayon White, Barry White, Maurice White all running and they have to split that 60% under our current system ensuring that none are successful in unseating an incumbent that has less than the majority of the population’s support. Now, I like all the Whites I just mentioned. But by creating a rank system where I can select my first, second, third choice, etc., I have more choice, it stops political displacement when multiple candidates you do like run and makes them all valid. Nullifying the notion of voting for the less of two evils. Rank Choice Voting would ensure that the prevailing candidate would truly represent the majority of the voter’s support and create a much more equitable system. And in a city that has one of the greatest disparities in the nation, desperately needs a racial equity lens applied to ever single public policy. #dosomething



50 Milk St 11<sup>th</sup> Floor Boston MA 02109 USA  
<https://voatz.com> – [info@voatz.com](mailto:info@voatz.com)

September 24, 2021

The Honorable Christina Henderson  
Council of the District of Columbia  
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Suite 408  
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Councilmember Henderson:

Thank you for introducing Bill 372, the "Voter Ownership, Integrity, Choice, and Equity (VOICE) Amendment Act," a bill that would implement ranked choice voting in DC and promote competition and diversity in elections. Voatz is a recognized leader in supporting secure and auditable electronic voting using biometrics and a blockchain network. As the Council considers ranked choice voting, we hope that you will also consider mobile voting options which could further increase voting accessibility and efficiency, and improve a voter's experience when exercising the franchise.

At Voatz, making voting accessible for everyone drives everything we do. We believe that everyone should have the right to cast their ballots using a secure mobile application, particularly those who cannot or who are challenged to vote in person or on paper, specifically our deployed military service members, overseas citizens, and voters with disabilities. For the past six years, Voatz has been pioneering accessible, secure, and auditable technology that provides access for those who can't get to the polls. We have successfully run 82 elections since 2016. For some participants, this was their first time voting in decades.

We are grateful the VOICE Amendment Act includes an education drive to increase voter turnout for communities of color, seniors, and historically marginalized voters, because these are precisely the communities Voatz is helping to reach. A mobile voting option would enhance your outreach and accessibility efforts and ensure seamless results in a ranked choice voting election. Specifically, Voatz has a built-in capacity for ranked choice voting and instant tabulation. Voatz's technology is widely available and easy to use on a smartphone and provides secure verification. The device submits the rankings directly to the location where they will be tabulated and provides auditable results.

Voatz welcomes the opportunity to work with you to ensure an accessible and user-friendly ranked choice voting system. We are confident that our partnership would lead to more diverse, accessible, and efficient elections in the District. We greatly appreciate your time and leadership on this issue. Should you have any questions, please contact Jack Jacobson at 202-251-7644.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nimit Sawhney", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Nimit Sawhney  
Co-founder and CEO  
Voatz

CC: Chairman Phil Mendelson  
Chair Pro Tempore Kenyan McDuffy  
Councilmember Anita Bonds  
Councilmember Elissa Silverman  
Councilmember Robert White

Councilmember Brianne K. Nadeau  
Councilmember Brooke Pinto  
Councilmember Mary M. Cheh  
Councilmember Janeese Lewis George  
Councilmember Charles Allen  
Councilmember Vincent Gray  
Councilmember Trayon White, Sr.

#### More about Voatz:

Voatz has been pioneering accessible, secure, and auditable technology that provides access for those who can't get to the polls, or for whom paper ballots don't work. In order to do this, we leverage the latest security features of smartphones, along with facial recognition technology to verify and validate the identity of the voter. As such, the building blocks of our security rest upon the very well-tested, vetted strength of several American companies like Apple, Google, Amazon, and Microsoft along with some path breaking technology developed by our team. We leverage biometrics to secure and protect the voter's identity and we automatically produce a paper ballot for tabulation at the jurisdiction. Lastly, we use a blockchain-based tamper resistant ledger to secure the aggregate vote and to enable rigorous post-election audits so that we can ensure voter intent is reflected in the overall count without revealing the voter's identity.

We have run 82 elections since 2016, and the system has been used successfully by 31 counties across five states with no issues in the tabulation or integrity of votes. These elections have all been declared successes by the jurisdictions, and many of the voters who have used the system have shared valuable feedback about how this new voting option made participation accessible for them.

**Name:** Charles Wilson

**Organization:** Chair, DC Democratic State Committee

Members of the Council of the District of Columbia,

At a time when the right to vote is under attack and the pandemic has caused us all to consider new, safer ways to cast a ballot, I would like to thank the DC Council for generating a conversation about how to make our local campaigns more equitable and representative of District residents.

Is Rank Choice Voting Good for the District (REPEAT)?

The DC Democratic Party started the year off asking this very question. Over the preceding months we encouraged all of our Ward and Affiliate Democratic organizations to host panel discussions to answer this question.

After extensive debate, the DC Democratic Party overwhelmingly voted on September 9, 2021 to reject the implementation of ranked choice voting. We urge the DC Council to vote to reject the Voter Ownership, Integrity, Choice, and Equality (VOICE) Amendment Act of 2021 and work with us to develop reforms that will best serve all residents in the District of Columbia.

This recommendation is based on three core factual concerns:

1. The District faces a substantial challenge with under voting which would be exacerbated by ranked choice voting.

Election data from the DC Board of Elections indicates when District voters are asked to vote for up to two candidates for At-Large Councilmember, consistently more than half choose not to do so. This effect is most significant in Wards 2, 7 and 8. Data shows this is consistent even though every two years both candidates and community and political organizations inform voters they can vote for up to 2 candidates in At-Large Council races. Wards 7 and 8 each reported undervotes of greater than 70% during a Presidential election year. Although undervote data was unavailable for the 2020 election, we've noticed this trend since the 2014 General Election data.

Elections in which only one candidate is selected do not have the same result. The share of undervotes in the Ward 7 and Ward 8 Council races was in the single digits in 2016, in line with other parts of the District.

The significant gap in participation in multi-vote elections causes a significant concern for equity in a ranked choice voting system. If voters in certain parts of the District consistently do not rank more than one candidate, their voices are less likely to be heard in a District-wide race. This concern is reinforced by a recent analysis of ranked choice voting in New York City, which showed that lower-income areas were less likely to participate.

## 2. District wards are not equal when it comes to voter turnout.

The DC Democratic Party wholeheartedly supports the effort to increase voter education. This education is needed to help fill gaps in the current election system with a twenty-point difference in participation between wards with the highest and lowest turnout in DC elections.

However, we challenge the argument by ranked choice voting advocates that the VOICE Amendment Act is the solution to this problem. Low turnout cannot be strictly linked to candidate choice. General apathy, concentrated poverty, literacy issues, and difficulty in completing the ballot also stand in the way of full participation in our elections.

One has to look no further than the 2018 primary election where Ward 3 and 6 each reported more than a 21% turnout compared to Ward 7's 12% and Ward 8's 8%. Let that sink in for a minute (REPEAT). In that election 1 Ward had a greater voter turnout than Wards 7 and 8 combined. RCV would further tilt greater electoral influence to more affluent parts of the District.

We believe that other methods, including robust voter education, are necessary for filling this gap.

## 3. The VOICE Amendment Act's method for electing candidates in a multi-winner race is confusing and creates distrust in the process.

While many of our members felt that they clearly understood how ranked choice voting would work in elections with a single winner, the method that would be

used to tabulate votes for the At-Large Council race caused serious concern. The proposed legislation uses a series of complicated formulas to create an election threshold and a surplus fraction that transfers a value of less than one for the voter's second ranked candidate. Not only is this confusing for voters, there are also no federally certified or recognized election machines capable of handling this type of tabulation.

While ranked choice voting may be suitable for some jurisdictions, The DC Democratic Party believes RCV is not right for the District based on the mentioned factual concerns. We should introduce measures aimed at strengthening voters' trust and confidence in the system, not introducing convoluted processes that will further alienate voters and exacerbate the public's distrust in our electoral process.

Again, we ask the DC Council to reject the VOICE Amendment Act and increase funding for additional voter education by the DC Board of Elections, prioritizing populations with traditionally lower voting rates or a high percentage of undervotes.

Keith Hasan-Towery  
VOICE ACT Testimony

Today, I am going to pretend to be a medical doctor because I'm going to isolate the problems in our current voting system, and prescribe evidence based treatments instead of using an experimental treatment, also known as Rank Choice Voting.

When I think about the health of our voting system, one particular measure I like to consider is the under and over votes. Sure, some people intentionally skip certain races or bullet vote, but what we see consistently in DC election is that over half of voters in the District undervote in the At-Large race. Those percentages increases even more in Wards 2, 7, and 8. If we can't even get folks to bubble in Two candidates in our current system, how will move them to selecting up to 5? There's are symptoms of poor voter education, and the one thing the bill gets right! If I were a doctor, I would see the undervote as an illness and I would prescribe it with a targeted dose of voter education for the current system before and during the election cycle and continue to monitor the symptoms.

There are so many candidates running and there are many communities in DC that aren't represented in the council. Some people are sold that RCV will yield a Latinx or LGBTQ+ Person of Color Councilmember. But, RCV is a false positive. Those candidates run but, cancel each other out because the "Independents" run in bulk and oversaturate our ballots. The Dems, Republicans, Statehood Greens, all have to caucus, they all submit one candidate for the November ballot, while the "Independents" has 20 times this amount of candidates on a ballot for Council. If I were a doctor, I would see this overgrowth as troubling and I would prescribe some way to have a primary for these independents, especially those that uses public financing. Or I would amend our home rule act to remove the "minority party" requirement or expand the number of seats on the council like we have in our state constitution.

DC isn't Oakland, Maine, or New York, as a Doctor, I would have unique care plans for each of my patients. RCV will not motivate less affluent communities to vote. RCV will not motivate candidates to engage in low voter areas, instead, they are going to spend more time in more affluent and higher voter turnout areas so they fight to be their second choice! Once again making less affluent-low turnout areas the candidate's last choice. RCV is sure to enhance the mistrust and apathy in our election system. As a Doctor, I would want to treat the mistrust and apathy and provide a treatment that would strengthen the electorate. I would recommend to my patient, DC, to avoid RCV. As an attentive and caring Doctor, you would want to provide your patient with the best prescription to cure their illness and jump start their journey to the road of recovery. Our current system isn't perfect, but there are things we can do to heal this system with proven treatments instead of introducing an experiment treatment like RCV that can jeopardize the recovery of a large subset of Washingtonian voters.

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### **VOICE Amendment Act Testimony**

Thank you to Councilmember Allen and Committee for providing the opportunity for public input on the VOICE Amendment Act. My name is Matt LaFortune. I am an officer with the Ward 6 Democrats and a member of the DC Democratic State Committee.

This fall, I served as the Co-Chair of the DC Democrats' Subcommittee on Ranked Choice Voting. When our party chairman, Charles Wilson, asked me to help lead this effort, he did so knowing that I hadn't yet made up my mind about the issue. I've been intrigued by the potential of Ranked Choice Voting to decrease polarization in Congressional elections and have closely followed its implementation elsewhere. Whatever its benefits in other places, however, I have become convinced that this proposal is not right for DC voters.

Fundamentally, Ranked Choice Voting is not equitable. It casts aside our current one-person, one vote principles in favor of an instant runoff system that advantages voters who rank a maximum of five candidates in every race on the ballot, from mayor all the way down to ANC. Those that bullet vote, or select only the single candidate who they want for each position, are at risk of having their votes thrown out in later rounds of tallying when their preferred candidate is eliminated. A [Politico review of Ranked Choice Voting in New York City](#) this summer showed that whiter, wealthier areas of the city were significantly more likely to rank more than one candidate. Lower income neighborhoods and many Black and Latino communities were roughly 20 percent more likely to bullet vote, on average. Fundamentally, Ranked Choice Voting concentrates voting power among wealthier, more educated, often Whiter communities.

We know how this will play out in DC because we already have a multivote system for our DC Council At-Large election every two years. Voters have the option to select two candidates in that race but often vote for just one person or no one at all. In the 2018 General Election, 53% of voters citywide cast "undervotes" or selected fewer than two options. This is more common in Wards 7 and 8 where the undervoting percentage was higher than 70% in the 2016 Presidential year.

These undervotes must be considered when thinking through the implications of Ranked Choice Voting. A core argument in favor of RCV is that it produces majority winners. In fact, [more than half of Ranked Choice Voting races still resulted in pluralities](#) over the past two decades in Minnesota. In New York this year, [only 44% of voters ranked Mayor-elect Eric Adams over his final round opponent, Kathryn Garcia](#). Calling this a majoritarian system disregards the 140,000 voters who did not rank either of those candidates at all.

Finally, I'd like to close by thanking the Council for seriously considering ways to improve our voting system. No system is perfect and the DC Democrats look forward to future discussions about changes that increase access to the polls and equality of representation. Unfortunately, Ranked Choice Voting does neither and I therefore urge this Committee to reject the VOICE Amendment Act.



**NOVEMBER 18<sup>TH</sup> TESTIMONY**  
**COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY AND PUBLIC SAFETY**  
**B 24-0372**

I am Anita Bellamy Shelton, a 60-year resident of Ward 1, in the interest of 332,500 women, 70,000 senior citizens and 8.5% persons with disabilities.

We strongly urge the 5 members of the Judiciary Committee to reject, in its entirety, B 24-0372, entitled, “The Voter Ownership, Integrity, Choice, and Equity Amendment Act of 2021”. The legislation, which is mistitled and not transparent, should be relabeled, “Ranked Choice Voting Act”. The review of the Ranked Choice Voting legislation and the study of its implementation in other jurisdictions suggest the committee should reject its adoption in the District of Columbia for several reasons.

1. Ranked Choice Voting denies the voting rights as guaranteed in the Constitution, “one person-one vote” and the candidate with the most votes is declared winner. The proposed Ranked Choice Voting nullifies this right and instead, establishes an arbitrary second vote, which in essence disqualifies the intent of the person to vote first for the person of their choice. The testimony of Daniel Wedderburn will give a more definitive account of Ranked Choice Voting.
2. Ranked Choice Voting Legislation violates the Home Rule. Although we seldom agree with the disaffection of the founders of the act, they clearly opposed run-off elections. The Ranked Choice Voting legislation clearly establishes the provision for a run-off election. It is frequently referred to by its authors as “instant run-off”. Attorney Dan Diamond will present testimony to question the legislative authority to amend the Home Rule Act. He will further suggest in his testimony the possibility of a legal suit which would involve the District in a lengthy and expensive court battle.

3. Ranked Choice legislation has been proven, in other jurisdictions, to have an adverse effect on female candidates and particularly African-American candidates. The study shows in Sacramento CA, prior to the adoption of Ranked Choice Voting there were twenty African Americans on the City Council. After the adoption of RCV, the number of African-American elected officials was reduced. The Academy Awards, that has used Ranked Choice Voting for a number of years, has failed to give best actor or actress award to worthy African-Americans. Verna Claiborne of DC Women in Politics will provide information substantiating the adverse effect Ranked Choice Voting has on African-Americans and people of color. Her testimony will further amplify the negative effect Ranked Choice Voting had on the New York City election as stated by the Mayor of the city, Bill de Blasio in the July 13, 2021, New York Times. He stated, “Evidence suggests that there is racial and class disparity in how voters used and participated in the run-off election.”
4. The vote counting method, which does not produce results for 20 or more days, as experienced in the recent New York City election, engenders distrust in the process of Ranked Choice Voting. An already suspicious voter, as a result of the Trump allegations of “voter-fraud”, will cause distrust in the outcomes after Ranked Choice Voting.
5. The approximate 10 million (\$10,000,000) dollars it would cost to purchase equipment for Ranked Choice Voting could be allocated to more critical programs such as crime prevention and reduction.

It has been clearly indicated that Ranked Choice Voting is a “solution to a problem that does not exist in the District of Columbia”. The members of The Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety, Brook Pinto, Anita Bonds, Vincent Gray, Mary Shea and Chairman Charles Allen have no alternative but to vote against Ranked Choice Voting, its entirety. The only other alternative would be to delay

consideration of the bill until the committee determines its impact on seniors and voters with disabilities.

**Anita Bellamy Shelton**

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DC Women in Politics President

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**Good Afternoon, Councilmember Allen and members of the Committee,**

**Thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Linda L. Gray and I am one of the Ward 4 Committeewomen of the DC Democratic State Committee and currently serve as the Vice chair of the DC Democratic Party. I am here to express my opposition to the Voter Ownership, Integrity, Choice and Equity Amendment Act of 2021, also and most notably known as Ranked Choice Voting.**

**As a proud 5<sup>th</sup> generation Washingtonian and a voter since the age of 18, ( a few decades) I have never experienced a problem with voting and I can't honestly recall an instance when the way we currently vote was deemed inefficient.**

**As Democrats, we vote in the primary and support the Democratic nominee in both national and local elections. Our elections have resulted in timely results, (projected winners the same day) and the winner declared by majority vote. This current way of voting has also produced a diverse body of elected officials by way of race and ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation and religion. In my opinion, RCV cannot change what has already been achieved. In fact the way we vote for our Congressional representative, the mayor, Attorney General and Council Representatives is parallel to the way we elect the President of the United States.**

**In our city it is true that voter turnout and participation is not equal in all 8 wards. The data clearly shows us that most of our more affluent neighborhoods and wards experience higher voter turnout. We also experience under voting in certain wards. We believe that RCV would create a further divide with respect to political influence to the more affluent parts of the District and increase such disparities in Wards 7 and 8 which would be severely impactful in DC elections.**

**RCV will take an enormous amount of time to educate voters, to consider the impact of some of our most vulnerable but dependable voting demographics such as seniors and other groups who may feel disenfranchised. Adequate time and attention to consider the impact of such a drastic change should be given**

prior to voting on changing how we vote. The real question is: Are our elections effective, efficient and fair? The answer to that question is yes. Therefore DC does not need a change in how we vote and we certainly do not want to be like other states and cities that suffered buyer's remorse in trying to fix something that is not broken only to then abandon such a bad decision of voting that does not address the needs of the District of Columbia as efficiently, effectively and fairly as our present way of voting: one voter one vote. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today.

Linda L. Gray,

Vice Chair, DC Democratic Party

**DC DEMOCRATIC STATE COMMITTEE WARD 4 COMMITTEEWOMAN  
RENEE BOWSER'S TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO BILL B24-0372, VOTER  
OWNERSHIP, INTEGRITY, CHOICE, AND EQUITY AMENDMENT ACT OF 2021**

November 18, 2021

Good day, Chairman Allen and other Councilmembers on the Committee on the Judiciary & Public Safety. I am Renée Bowser, Ward 4 Committeewoman on the DC Democratic State Committee. I am testifying in my role as Committeewoman in opposition to bill B24-0372, the Voter Ownership, Integrity, Choice, and Equity Amendment Act of 2021 (VOICE), that would introduce ranked choice voting (RCV) for all elections in the District of Columbia beginning June 2024. The Democratic Party, nationally and locally, supports the current plurality voting system. I am testifying against the ranked choice voting bill for the following reasons: 1) RCV does not produce a majority winner in elections; 2) the evidence is mixed whether RCV increases voter participation, particularly by people of color (POC); 3) RCV does not favorably impact candidates of color; 4) RCV does not remedy non-participation by disaffected and low-income voters; only institution of equitable policies, plans, and actions will help the electorate move toward broader electoral participation.

**Majority Winner?** The July 14, 2021 Statement of Introduction for the VOICE Amendment Act legislation claims that the RCV process produces a majority winner. Contrary to the claim, RCV does not produce a majority out of all voters who originally cast a ballot; rather it produces a majority among only the remaining voters (including due to exhausted voters).<sup>1</sup> The RCV method contrives a majority by artificially narrowing down the candidate field and produces a majority only out of the two candidates that remain.<sup>2</sup>

**No Determinative Evidence That RCV Increases Voter Turnout.** Contrary to the claim expressed in the bill's July 14 Statement of Introduction, several studies found that ranked choice voting did not invariably increase voter turnout. A 2014 study of the Minneapolis municipal elections showed that more affluent and white voters turned out at a higher rate for the ranked choice voting election than low-income neighborhoods and communities of color. The study concluded that ranked choice voting left in place the gap that favors white and affluent voters.<sup>3</sup> A 2016 study compared voter turnout and participation in local elections in eight American cities under ranked choice voting to plurality voting before the adoption of RCV in those cities and compared the RCV cities to a control group of similar

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<sup>1</sup> David Kimball, Joseph Anthony, Voter Participation with Ranked Choice Voting in the United States, Department of Political Science, University of Missouri-St. Louis, Oct. 2016 at 5.

<sup>2</sup> Aaron Hamlin, The Limits of Ranked-Choice Voting, Center for Election Science, Feb. 7, 2019.

<sup>3</sup> Lawrence Jacobs, Joanne Miller, Rank Choice Voting and the 2013 Minneapolis Elections, Feb. 2014 at 1.

cities using plurality voting. The 2016 study found that RCV does not appear to have a strong impact on voter turnout and ballot completion.<sup>4</sup>

**Ranked Choice Voting May or May Not Increase People of Color Representation.** A paper that investigated whether ranked choice voting elections affect the disproportionate representation by race and ethnicity in American elections found that “voters in RCV elections and those in plurality elections support candidates of color at similar (low) rates.”<sup>5</sup> Additionally, the paper concluded that additional voter information such as party affiliation leads voters to support candidates of color at higher rates in both plurality and RCV elections.<sup>6</sup> Accordingly, RCV did not seem to affect the likelihood of voters supporting candidates of color.<sup>7</sup>

Another analysis examined whether the expanded preference choices associated with ranked choice voting reduced the level of racially polarized voting in mayoral elections in California cities that adopted RCV.<sup>8</sup> The study, focused on Oakland and San Francisco, found that “rather than helping to smooth the path toward effective urban coalition politics, the results of this study raise the question of whether RCV may, in fact, add an additional barrier to the process of building and maintaining multiracial coalitions.”<sup>9</sup> (A 2019 thesis by University of North Carolina student Sara Tull examined the Interaction Between Ranked-Choice Voting and Minority Voter Turnout in California Mayoral Elections and found that San Francisco’s use of RCV produced a higher proportion of minority candidates on mayoral ballots while Oakland’s use of RCV produced a decreased proportion of minority candidates.)

**What Actions Will Cause Disaffected Citizens to Vote?** It’s the issues that determine whether disaffected citizens vote. Brookings authors argue that some Black candidates are better at speaking to issues that uplift the lives of Black and other working class and marginalized communities and thereby draw more votes.<sup>10</sup> At the same time, they point out that Black voters do not vote when they believe politicians do not meet their needs or the voters are protesting the inequalities embedded in the political process.<sup>11</sup> Another Brookings article argues that Black male voters are “looking for an authentic plan to

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<sup>4</sup> David Kimball, Joseph Anthony, Voter Participation with Ranked Choice Voting in the United States, Department of Political Science, University of Missouri-St. Louis, Oct. 2016 at 1.

<sup>5</sup> Melody Crowder-Meyer, Shana Gadarian, Jessica Trounstein, RCV is Neither Panacea nor Catastrophe for Minority Representation, New America, March 1, 2021 at 19.

<sup>6</sup> Id. at 19.

<sup>7</sup> Id.

<sup>8</sup> Jason McDaniel, Does More Choice Lead to Reduced Racially Polarized Voting? Assessing the Impact of Ranked-Choice Voting in Mayoral Elections, California Journal of Politics and Policy, 2018 at 19-20.

<sup>9</sup> Id. at 20.

<sup>10</sup> Rashawn Ray, Mark Whitlock, Setting the Record Straight on Black Voter Turnout, Brookings Institution, Sept. 12, 2019 at 2.

<sup>11</sup> Id. See Paul Jamison, Fenit Nirappil, Are D.C.’s Poorest Neighborhoods Falling off the Electoral Map? Wash Post, June 29, 2018.



address economic growth in Black communities, vocational and technological training that aligns with jobs, access to social services, and criminal justice reform."<sup>12</sup>

The bottom line is that Black, Brown, low-income working class, and homeless citizens require policies and systemic action that give disaffected voters reasons to vote. Ranked choice voting will not change DHCD's refusal to implement the law that requires using 50% of HPTF funding to house extremely low-income households. Ranked choice voting will not change DC government-led displacement that upflumed and upgraded the Navy Yard and other areas of the city while displacing Black residents. Ranked choice voting will not make the Zoning Commission halt its zoning decisions until it can properly view them through a racial equity lens mandated by the Comprehensive Plan. Ranked choice voting will not bring about one fair wage so that tipped workers will no longer be the poorest group of workers in the city at the mercy of the restaurant industry, the city's highest wage theft industry.

Accordingly, I oppose enacting a voting process that provides no advancement for disaffected voters—Black, Brown, and poor working-class voters who live day to day without the tools and opportunity for social and economic growth in DC. Rather than change our voting system to produce a progressive veneer, DC Council must enact measures that close the ever-widening income and wealth disparities between this city's poor and people of color residents and its wealthier and whiter residents. In sum, RCV is not for DC. Thank you.


Dated November 18, 2021

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<sup>12</sup> Rashawn Ray, To Win Black Men's Votes in 2020, Save Your Slogans and Speak to Our Priorities, Brookings Institution, Feb. 25, 2020 at 1.





12/2/21

**Ward 6 Councilmember Charles Allen**

1350 Pennsylvania Avenue NW-Suite 109, Washington, DC 20009

Dear Ward 6 Councilmember Charles Allen et al,

Hope all is well! Please accept this letter as my written testimony in the matter of **B24-0372 (VOICE Act)**. As the Ward 5 Committeewoman, I appreciate the voices of our local voters, stakeholders, and my colleagues of the DC Democratic State Committee raising concerns on B24-0372 (VOICE Act) also known as Rank Choice Voting (RCV) system. I have followed the organizers presenting Rank Choice Voting (RCV) very closely to get an understanding of what they're socializing for DC Voters to implement. As well as completed my own research on the matter as I am a DC voter and native Washingtonian. I also learned that a key organizer of RCV, is a resident of Ward 5 where I reside and have met with this key organizer on numerous occasions. This key organizer is also a new voice in our political ecosystem but a very familiar voice of the group who championed Initiative 81, also known as the Entheogenic Plant and Fungus Policy Act of 2020.


In the matter of RCV, I'd like to lead with some history and an outlook on the future of DC. We went from Chocolate City to reading headlines of "millennials attracted to DC". Our great city's revitalization is bound to lead to new voices and ideas entering our communities and local political ecosystem. Those same new voices shape our social and economic vitality. As well as contribute to the agenda for election reform. When we look even closer, we see an even stronger response to DC Statehood now more than ever. We are also living an era of expressions and I'm losing count of the different types of eras but all of this is relevant. As well as, we are all healing and working aggressively to support our communities after being at the hands of the Trump administration for 4 years and gut-wrenching disparities elevated by a pandemic where everyone including pets were impacted.

Everywhere you turn, a type of reform is trending! RCV is becoming widely popular in 10 States with an emphasis on States impacted by Runoffs. Fortunately, DC as a United States Territory with a traditional voting system, isn't impacted by runoffs for local races at this time. DC as a United States

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Territory however has a growing population and once it becomes the 51st State, there's already a forecast of a population the size of New York. New York City recently adopted RCV for their citywide election and what I'll say to that is New York isn't fighting for Statehood nor does the road for advocacy lead to New York; it leads to DC. Even looking at the 2014 Senior Executive Service (SES) data as we launched a 2021 Plum Book initiative, NY nor any other State could hold a candle to the number of DC residents that are SES.

It is crystal clear, DC as a US Territory of 700,000 residents doesn't have an immediate need for RCV as we don't currently have the challenges of runoff elections and we don't have Statehood. If these same organizers for RCV can travel to get 10 States onboard, we need that same energy and commitment for DC Statehood. DC Statehood is the ultimate priority!

Could there ever be a need once we become a State and/or if the popularity grows in major urban cities? The answer to that question is simple, yes there could possibly be a need as millennials are the drivers of the future but that's not how B24-0372 (Voice Act) is being presented to DC stakeholders and voters. Based on 2015 data gathered from Brookings Metropolitan Policy Program (attached), DC ranks the highest in millennial growth (34%) and millennials are driving a Metropolitan America focused on reforms. It's no secret that in 2030 the youngest baby boomer will be 65 years old. I even borderline Gen X and Millennials to be clear. We already saw the call for replacing 1700 retiring police officers as early as 2015. Then to be smacked with a pandemic in the 2030 timeline as generation's transition. You can't help but to learn from a local senior advocate such as Ward 5 own Bob King fighting in a pandemic for seniors access to voting and we can't leave out those with disabilities such as low vision for one living in a pandemic. Our focus could be elevating continuity for voting and strengthening federal support by way of mutual agreements as voting is an essential function for the nation. RCV doesn't address voting as an essential function using real world experiences.


### **What does RCV mean right now for DC voters?**

After thoroughly evaluating, it means we should remain in an informed posture only at this time. We don't want to stifle advocacy or voices in the fight to uphold democracy or bring much needed reforms. Everyone should have a place to be great but also have a mutual respect for priorities during

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a global pandemic for voting constituents. We could benefit focusing on challenging making voting part of continuity planning and bridging this essential function from the top (federal) down (local). Ensuring the support and resources are readily have a pipeline and seat for the federal funding pool. We're all still in this pandemic recovery together as the nation is bracing for the impact of moratoriums preventing evictions being lifted; everyone's time and resources are crucial right now. There have been zero days off in recovery from this pandemic for elected officials, gatekeepers, activists, businesses, and families.

*Recommendation:* It's encouraged to possibly test RCV in smaller voting opportunities with various clubs and/or run an exercise (pilot program) during the candidate endorsement forums where 65% of the vote is needed to achieve the endorsement. This will allow meaningful exchanges to begin, give homegrown feedback, and more data to illustrate to larger audiences in the future. We shouldn't prematurely encourage implementing RCV now without a valid reason, a well-organized plan w/ a full SWOT analysis, or the will of the people behind it.

Currently, some of the biggest challenges States or a major urban city such as New York faced with RCV were:

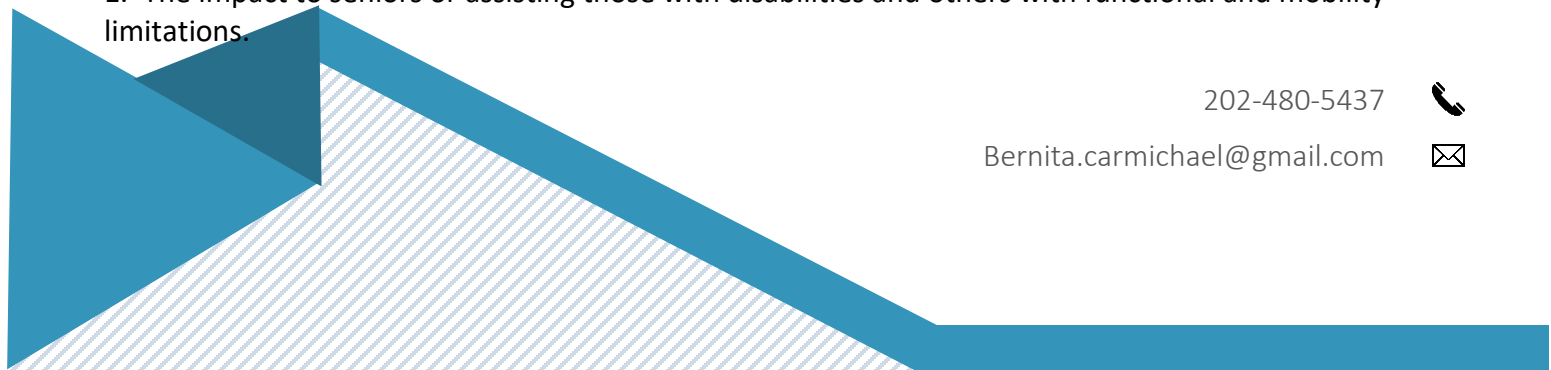
1. Implementing the uniqueness of RCV for absentee ballots
2. Timely Educating Voters on the new system
3. Election results delays. (Stakeholder collaboration is key)


***What's not being said about RCV for our Voters is:***

1. The impact to seniors or assisting those with disabilities and others with functional and mobility limitations.

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2. Feasibility studies so elected officials can associate how much this implementation is costing taxpayers.
  3. Federal or local board of elections buy-in not publicly represented during the socialization of RCV or planning for implementation.
  4. Stressors aspiring leaders or incumbents face.
  5. Corrective actions when the plan fails, especially for those submitting absentee.
  6. What's the RCV benefit for US territories without Statehood?
  7. Is RCV an essential function for continuity of voting/elections?

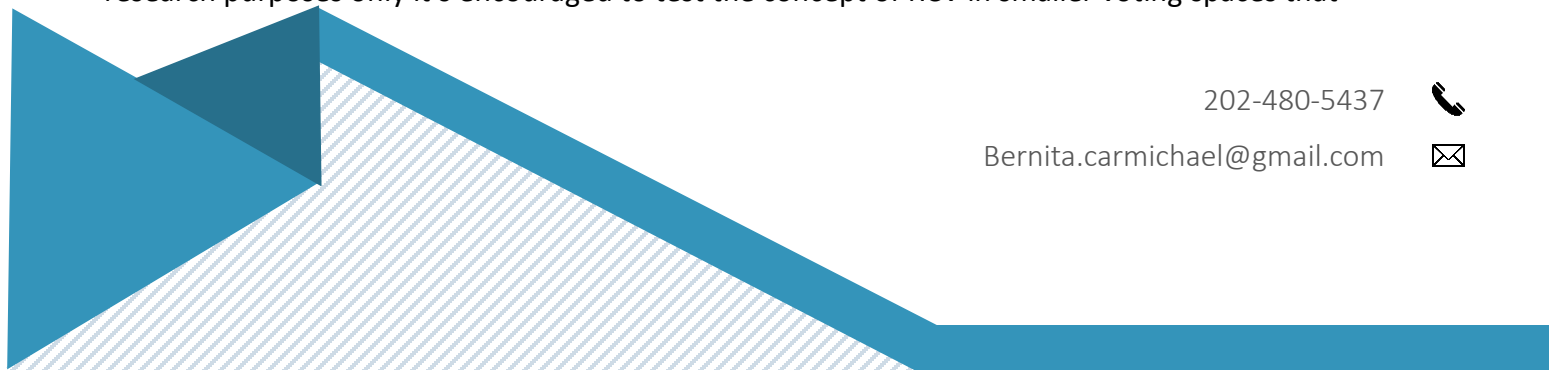
Another thing that comes to mind for DC, is having a system in place to provide direct feedback to the owners moving agendas using organizers. Area's such as conduct and preparedness doesn't appear to be a concern or reaching the Owners of RCV. Using operators isn't enough and I've outlined below additional RCV observations of my own and the Ward 5 community with recommendations:


**1. Poor presentation and project management-** The organizers tasked w/ getting the buy-in for RCV have failed to clearly demonstrate their own understanding of RCV. Information presented by the organizers were mainly quotes from articles. The organizers weren't able to highlight or provide a clear proposed plan for testing or capturing all DC voters. Collaboration with stakeholders is critical and was lacking. Very little emphasis on what RCV would look like for seniors or assisting those with disabilities and others with functional and mobility limitations. Presenters must understand the various communication styles needed to connect with their audience such as visual learners.

*Recommendation:* Encourage the owner of Rank Choice Voting to allow hand selected homegrown talent from stakeholders to be added to official training and research team. Have them collectively propose ways forward to socialize, exercise, and brief stakeholders on their results. Again for research purposes only it's encouraged to test the concept of RCV in smaller voting spaces that

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have a 65% or more voting requirement. For example, endorsement forums with straw polls or clubs that have voting models that speak to RCV.

**2. Posture of Organizers & Public Discourteous Treatment of Ward 5 Elected Official-** It's said, "The smugness" of the organizers and their lack of respect publicly for elected officials has turned many of the residents off. I witnessed it myself during their presentation at the Ward 5 Dems meeting where Councilmember Kenyan McDuffie was unprofessionally attacked by a key organizer and the focus should've been building relationships for buy-in; not creating a rift.

*Recommendation:* Send complaint reports up to the Parent company of RCV; demand investing in homegrown organizers that can engage or create a shared interest if RCV could ever be a future implementation. A little Train-the-trainer could go a long ways. Collaboration is key but there's no real hurry right now for RCV.

In closing, don't forget the attachment included as part of this written testimony.

Be well and thanks for your service always,

***Bernita Carmichael***

Bernita Carmichael  
Ward 5 Committeewoman

[Attachment]

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# THE MILLENNIAL GENERATION:

A demographic bridge to America's diverse future



William H. Frey  
January 2018

**B** | Metropolitan Policy Program  
at BROOKINGS

# Overview

The millennial generation, over 75 million strong is America's largest—eclipsing the current size of the postwar baby boom generation. While much attention has been given to this generation's unique attributes—its technological savvy, its tolerance and independence, and its aversion to large institutions—one aspect of millennials is most relevant to its future impact on the nation: its racial and ethnic diversity.

The millennial generation is the demographic “bridge” to the nation's diverse future. By the mid-2040s, racial and ethnic minorities are projected to make up over half of all Americans, but the 2020 census will show that the postmillennial generation—people who are younger than millennials—will already be minority white. This means that millennials, now 44 percent minority, will pave the way for the generations behind them as workers, consumers, and leaders in business and government in their acceptance by and participation in tomorrow's more racially diverse America.

As a bridge to the future, this highly diverse generation will face both opportunities and challenges. Race and ethnic disparities in education attainment, family formation, income, and housing persist among the millennials. These differences need to be recognized because they

will affect their current and future quality of life—including their health and well-being as this generation ages.

The national picture of a population that is diversifying in its younger ages while its white population is rapidly aging is an oversimplification because it does not account for variation among states and metropolitan areas. Although the public and media attention tends to focus on the lives of millennials in high-profile markets such as New York, Washington, D.C., and San Francisco, local contexts for the social and economic opportunities available to millennials differ widely across the country.

This report, its appendices, and its associated interactive website examine the demographic makeup of millennials for the nation, the 100 largest metropolitan areas, and all 50 states. With an emphasis on its unique racial diversity, this report compares the millennial generation with earlier counterparts at the same stage of life and assesses how different segments of the millennial population are faring, as well as where they are living. Most notably, it postulates how millennials can represent a demographic bridge to the future—helping to close the racial and cultural generation gap that, as recent politics have shown, is dividing the nation.

# Table of contents

|                                                                                                           |           |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>Introduction .....</b>                                                                                 | <b>4</b>  |
| <b>Who are millennials and how distinct are they? .....</b>                                               | <b>6</b>  |
| Millennial size and diversity                                                                             |           |
| Millennials' unique attributes reflect their diversity                                                    |           |
| <i>Language spoken at home, immigration status, and interracial marriages</i>                             |           |
| <i>Marital status and household relationships</i>                                                         |           |
| <i>Education attainment</i>                                                                               |           |
| <i>Homeownership</i>                                                                                      |           |
| <i>Financial security</i>                                                                                 |           |
| <b>Where are millennials living? .....</b>                                                                | <b>15</b> |
| Growth and share of millennials in metropolitan areas and states                                          |           |
| Racial and ethnic diversity among metropolitan areas and states                                           |           |
| Millennials in urban cores, suburbs, and exurbs                                                           |           |
| <b>How do millennials differ on education and poverty across metropolitan areas and states? .....</b>     | <b>24</b> |
| Education                                                                                                 |           |
| Poverty                                                                                                   |           |
| <b>How will millennials serve as a “bridge” across generations? .....</b>                                 | <b>31</b> |
| Millennials and the cultural generation gap                                                               |           |
| Geography of the cultural generation gap                                                                  |           |
| Projecting millennials' role into the future                                                              |           |
| <b>Conclusion .....</b>                                                                                   | <b>40</b> |
| <b>Appendix A: Race-ethnic composition of millennial population, 100 largest metropolitan areas .....</b> | <b>42</b> |



# Introduction

The millennial generation, over 75 million strong is America's largest—eclipsing the current size of the postwar baby boom generation. Now all fully adults, millennials make up nearly a quarter of the total U.S. population, 30 percent of the voting age population, and almost two-fifths of the working age population. While much attention has been given to this generation's unique attributes—its technological savvy, its tolerance and independence, and its aversion to large institutions—one aspect of millennials is most relevant to its future impact on the nation: its racial and ethnic diversity.

The millennial generation is the demographic “bridge” to the nation's diverse future. By the mid-2040s, racial and ethnic minorities are projected to make up over half of all Americans, but the 2020 census will show that the postmillennial generation—people who are younger than millennials—will already be minority white. This means that millennials, now 44 percent minority, will pave the way for the generations behind them as workers, consumers, and leaders in business and government in their acceptance by and participation in tomorrow's more racially diverse America.

As a bridge to the future, this highly diverse generation will face both opportunities and challenges. Race and ethnicity disparities in education attainment, family formation, income, and housing persist among millennials. These differences need to be recognized because they will affect their current and future quality of life—including their health and well-being as this generation ages.

Moreover, the national picture of a population that is diversifying in its younger ages while its white population is rapidly aging is an oversimplification because it does not account for variation among states and metropolitan areas. Although the public and media attention tends to focus on the lives of millennials in high-profile

markets such as New York, Washington, D.C., and San Francisco, local contexts for the social and economic opportunities available to millennials differ widely across the country.

For example, in Bakersfield, Calif., the millennial population is 59 percent Hispanic and 30 percent white; and among those ages 25-34, 29 percent are in poverty and only 14 percent graduated from college. In Minneapolis-St Paul, 71 percent of millennials are white; and among those ages 25-34, just 10 percent are in poverty and 47 percent are college graduates. By virtue of their distinct demographic profiles, each area provides different opportunities and challenges for millennials to succeed in serving as bridges to the next generation.

At the local level, millennials affect important dynamics that influence housing markets, educational institutions, tax bases, and labor forces, not to mention their implications for altering local economies, levels of income inequality, and needs for promoting greater racial and social inclusion. As such, local political officials, industry leaders, university and community college networks, and nonprofit institutions need to be made aware of changes this new adult generation will bring.

This report, its appendices, and its associated interactive website examine the demographic makeup of millennials for the nation, the 100 largest metropolitan areas, and all 50 states. With an emphasis on its unique racial diversity, this report compares the millennial generation with earlier counterparts at the same stage of life and assesses how different segments of the millennial population are faring, as well as where they are living. Most notably, it postulates how millennials can represent a demographic bridge to the future—helping to close the racial and cultural generation gap that, as recent politics have shown, is dividing the nation.

**This report addresses four questions:**

1. Who are millennials and how distinct are they?
2. Where are millennials living?
3. How do millennials differ on education and poverty across metropolitan areas and states?
4. How will millennials serve as a bridge across generations?

In answering these questions, this report draws from a variety of U.S. Census Bureau data, including the Current Population Survey, the American Community Survey, census estimates and projections, as well as historical decennial censuses. It also presents metropolitan area projections conducted by the author.<sup>1</sup> Millennials are defined as persons born between 1981 and 1997. In some parts of the report, special focus is given to younger millennials, ages 18-24, and older millennials, ages 25-34, as these groups represent different stages of the young adult cycle.



## Who are millennials and how distinct are they?

The “millennial” label is applied to a generation with birth years of 1981 through 1997, which followed the “birth dearth” period of Generation X (born 1965-1980), which was preceded by the baby boom generation (born 1946-1964). The exact dates of the millennial generation vary among researchers.<sup>2</sup> However, as with the baby boomers, the millennials’ distinction is associated not just with their large size—at 75.3 million, the millennial generation has now surpassed the baby boomers—but also with their unique attributes in terms of demographics, tastes, and lifestyles. As their name implies, they are the first generation to reach adulthood in the new millennium, suggesting that they will usher in changes that will be followed by later generations this century.

### Millennial size and diversity

Despite their large size, millennials, are not as dominant as a share of the total population today as the baby boomers were when they were young adults. This can be seen in Figure 1, which compares the baby boomers in 1980 with millennials in 2015. In 1980, baby boomers, then ages 16-34, represented 33 percent of the population and vastly outweighed generations that were their seniors. Their demographic imprint alone shows why, at the time, baby boomers held such power in the workplace and marketplace. In contrast, millennial young adults today, while also large in numbers, represent 23 percent of the population and must contend with sizable older generations, including baby boomers, in gaining attention socially, economically, and politically.

Millennials are distinct from earlier young adult generations in one important demographic respect: their racial and ethnic diversity. Overall, millennials are 55.8 percent white and nearly 30 percent “new minorities”—Hispanic, Asian, and those identifying as two or more races. In 2000, when millennials were just beginning to turn 18, young adults were 63 percent white. In 1980, when occupied by baby boomers, young adults were 78 percent white. The large waves of immigration to the U.S. in the 1980s and 1990s, especially from Latin America and Asia,<sup>3</sup> coupled with the aging of the white population,<sup>4</sup> made millennials a far more racially and ethnically diverse generation than any that preceded it.

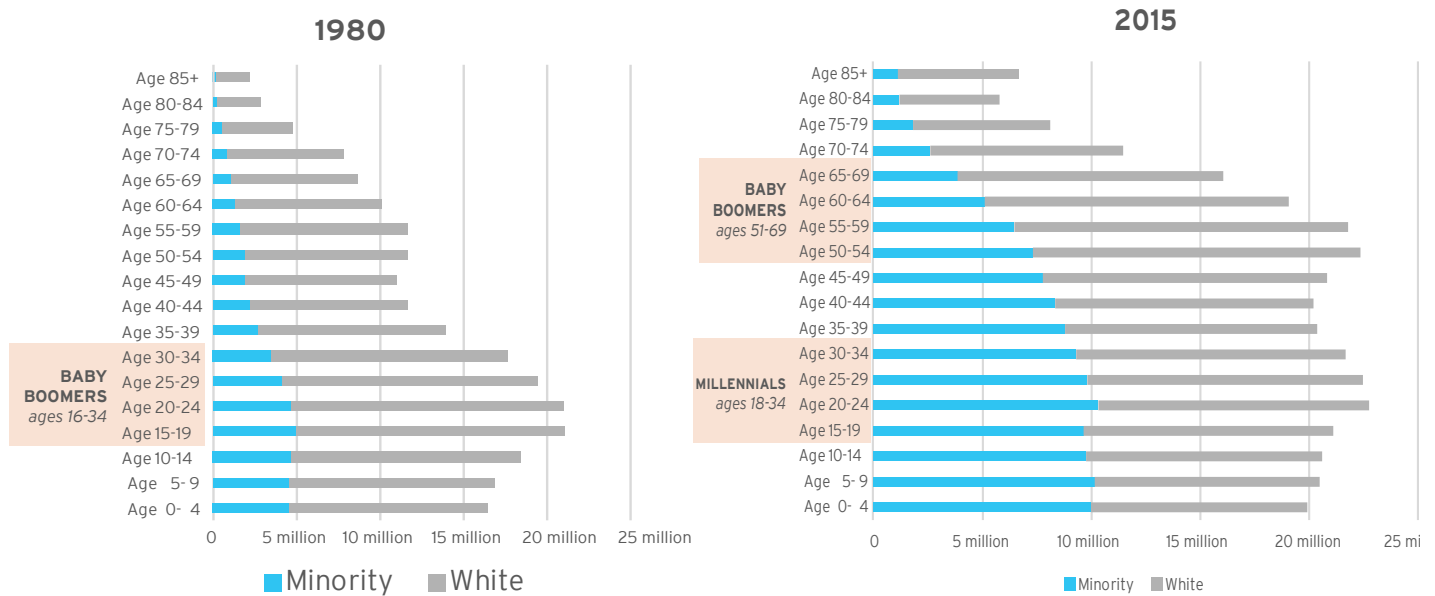
As shown in Figure 2, there is a clear shift in racial and ethnic makeup between millennials and prior generations. In 2015, the 55 and older population, including most baby boomers and those born before them, were “whiter” than the country as a whole (75 percent vs. 61.6 percent), and among them, blacks were the largest racial minority. Those in the 35-54 age group, including Generation X and the tail end of the baby boomers (at 61.5 percent white, 17.6 percent Hispanic, and 12.5 percent black), were roughly representative of the nation’s racial and ethnic composition.

Tomorrow’s diversity is foreshadowed by the postmillennial generation—persons now under age 18. As Figure 2 indicates, whites make up just over half (51.5 percent) of this generation, of whom people ages one through five are minority white. Over one-third of this group consists of

FIGURE 1

## Age and race-ethnic distributions of U.S. population

1980 and 2015

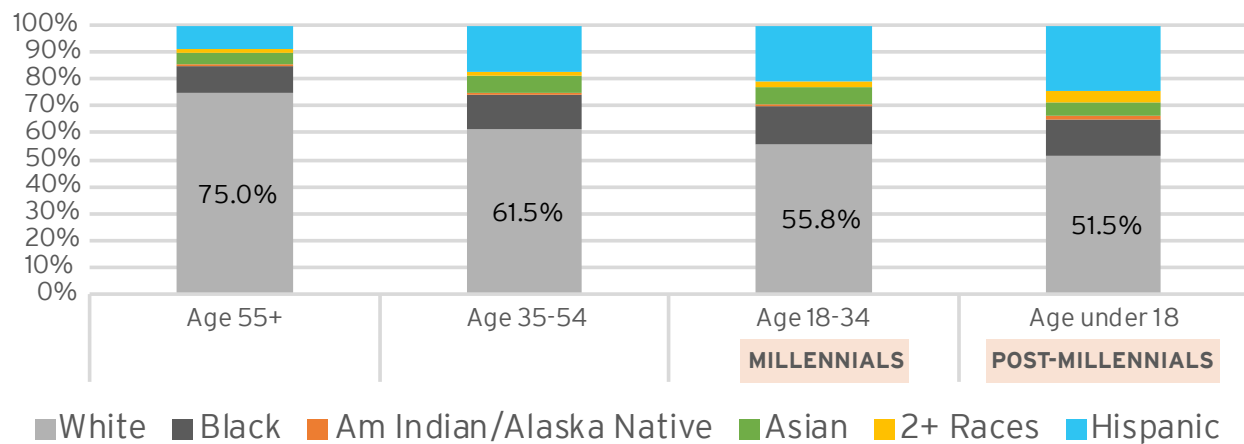


Source: Author's analysis of 1980 U.S. Decennial Census and Census population estimates

FIGURE 2

## U.S. race-ethnic profiles for age groups

2015



Source: Author's analysis of U.S. Census population estimates

new minorities, and almost a quarter is made up of Hispanics.

Plainly it is the millennial generation that is ushering in the nation's broader racial diversity. This demographic bridge is illustrated by the growth of racial and ethnic minorities among the young adult population, as shown in Figure 3. Between 2000 and 2015, there was a net loss of one quarter-million white young adults as more whites aged out of the young adult (18-34 year old age bracket) than aged into it. Other racial and ethnic groups did the opposite. Over the same period, as millennials entered this bracket, there were net gains of 4.3 million Hispanics and more than 1.5 million each of Asian and black Americans.

Ultimately, the impact of the aging of the white population on younger generations cannot be overemphasized. Census Bureau projections indicate that, for the foreseeable future, postmillennial young adult populations will

continue to experience declines in their white populations, with racial and ethnic minorities responsible for all future gains.<sup>5</sup>

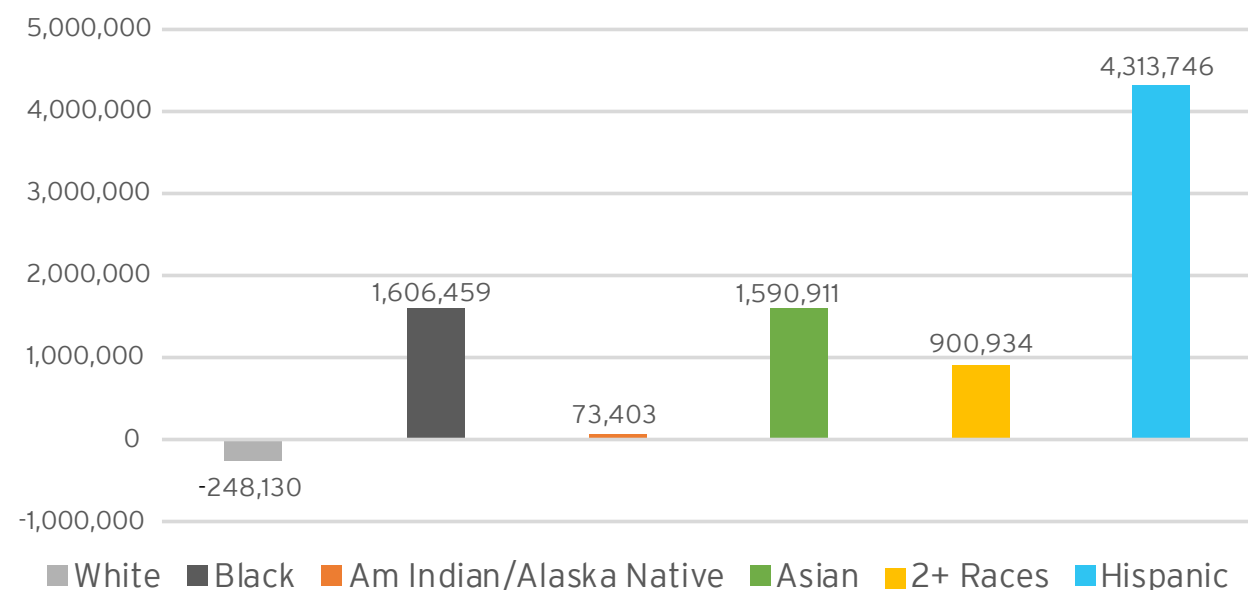
### **Millennials' unique attributes reflect their diversity**

Millennials are distinct in a number of respects when compared with earlier generations. However, the common view of millennials as a well-educated, tech-savvy generation that happened to come of age in a rough economic time must be seen in the context of the generation's broad racial and ethnic diversity. Because minority groups compose a larger slice of the millennial generation than for any prior young adult cohort, it is important to examine how each group fares and contributes to attributes that are associated with millennials.

Millennial comparisons with earlier generations are shown in Table 1 which contrasts key characteristics of millennials in 2015 to those

FIGURE 3

### **Change in the age 18-34 population by race-ethnicity 2000-2015**



Source: Author's analysis of U.S. Census population estimates

TABLE 1

**Comparisons of young adults of earlier eras with millennials in 2015**

| <b>Social and demographic profiles</b>                  | <b>Young adults<br/>1980*</b> | <b>Young adults<br/>2000*</b> | <b>Millennials<br/>2015*</b> |
|---------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <b>Percent</b>                                          |                               |                               |                              |
| <b>Race-ethnicity</b>                                   |                               |                               |                              |
| White#                                                  | 78                            | 63                            | 56                           |
| Black#                                                  | 12                            | 13                            | 14                           |
| Asian#                                                  | 2                             | 4                             | 6                            |
| Hispanic                                                | 7                             | 17                            | 21                           |
| Other Groups#                                           | 1                             | 3                             | 3                            |
| Total                                                   | 100                           | 100                           | 100                          |
| <b>Speaking language other than English<br/>at home</b> | 11                            | 23                            | 25                           |
| <b>Marriages that are interracial</b>                   | 5                             | 10                            | 14                           |
| <b>Currently married</b>                                |                               |                               |                              |
| Age 18-24                                               | 29                            | 14                            | 8                            |
| Age 25-34                                               | 68                            | 55                            | 44                           |
| <b>Percent household head or spouse**</b>               |                               |                               |                              |
| Age 18-24                                               | 39                            | 29                            | 24                           |
| Age 25-34                                               | 85                            | 76                            | 67                           |
| <b>College graduates ***</b>                            |                               |                               |                              |
| All                                                     | 24                            | 29                            | 36                           |
| Men                                                     | 28                            | 29                            | 33                           |
| Women                                                   | 21                            | 30                            | 39                           |
| <b>Percent homeowners</b>                               |                               |                               |                              |
| Age 18-24                                               | 26                            | 20                            | 20                           |
| Age 25-34                                               | 55                            | 47                            | 39                           |
| <b>Percent of persons in poverty</b>                    |                               |                               |                              |
| Age 18-24                                               | 12                            | 17                            | 20                           |
| Age 25-34                                               | 8                             | 10                            | 15                           |

\* Ages 18-34 unless otherwise noted

\*\* Includes persons living alone

\*\*\* Ages 25-34

# Pertains to non-Hispanic members of racial group

Source: Author's analysis of U.S. Census Bureau: Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplements 1980, 2000, and 2015; 1980 and 2000 Decennial Censuses; and 2015 American Community Survey

TABLE 2

**Comparisons of millennials by race-ethnicity, 2015**

| <b>Social and Demographic Profiles</b>                      | <b>White#</b> | <b>Black#</b> | <b>Hispanic</b> | <b>Asian#</b> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|---------------|-----------------|---------------|
| <b>Percent*</b>                                             |               |               |                 |               |
| <b>Nativity</b>                                             |               |               |                 |               |
| Foreign born                                                | 4             | 10            | 36              | 56            |
| Second generation                                           | 5             | 7             | 34              | 36            |
| Third and higher generation                                 | 91            | 83            | 30              | 8             |
|                                                             | 100           | 100           | 100             | 100           |
| <b>Percent speaking language other than English at home</b> | 6             | 9             | 72              | 72            |
| <b>Marital status **</b>                                    |               |               |                 |               |
| Currently married                                           | 48            | 23            | 45              | 52            |
| Never married                                               | 44            | 69            | 47              | 45            |
| Divorced, separated, or widowed                             | 7             | 8             | 8               | 3             |
|                                                             | 100           | 100           | 100             | 100           |
| <b>Relationship to household head **</b>                    |               |               |                 |               |
| Household head                                              | 48            | 51            | 42              | 41            |
| Spouse of head                                              | 23            | 10            | 20              | 24            |
| Child of head                                               | 13            | 21            | 16              | 17            |
| Other                                                       | 16            | 18            | 22              | 18            |
|                                                             | 100           | 100           | 100             | 100           |
| <b>Education **</b>                                         |               |               |                 |               |
| College graduate                                            | 43            | 23            | 17              | 62            |
| Some college                                                | 29            | 35            | 26              | 18            |
| High school graduate                                        | 23            | 35            | 31              | 15            |
| Not high school grad                                        | 5             | 7             | 26              | 5             |
|                                                             | 100           | 100           | 100             | 100           |
| <b>Percent homeowners **</b>                                | 56            | 33            | 37              | 43            |
| <b>Percent of persons in poverty</b>                        |               |               |                 |               |
| Ages 18-24                                                  | 16            | 29            | 22              | 19            |
| Ages 25-34                                                  | 11            | 24            | 21              | 13            |

\* Ages 18-34 unless otherwise noted

\*\* Ages 25-34

# Pertains to non-Hispanic members of racial group

Source: Author's analysis of U.S. Census Bureau Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement 2015 and 2015 American Community Survey

of young adults, ages 18-34, in 2000 and 1980, roughly corresponding to when Generation X and baby boomers were those ages. Disparities within the millennial generation among white, black, Hispanic and Asian millennials are shown in Table 2.

### **Language spoken at home, immigration status and interracial marriages**

In keeping with their racial and ethnic diversity and association with immigration, young adult millennials are more likely than their earlier counterparts to hold “global” attributes. One of these attributes is linguistic proficiency. Millennials are more likely than young adults in previous generations to speak a language other than English at home. Overall, a quarter of millennials speak a foreign language at home, compared with 23 percent of young adults in 2000 and just 11 percent in 1980 (see Table 1). More than seven in 10 Hispanic or Asian millennials speak a language other than English at home, compared with relatively few blacks and whites. Spanish is spoken at home by 16 percent of millennials and at least 17 percent are bilingual, with strong English proficiency despite speaking another language at home.

Another global attribute of millennials is their recent immigration status. Well over half of Asian millennials are foreign born, compared with 36 percent of Hispanics, 10 percent of blacks, and just 4 percent of whites (see Table 2). Although immigrants compose a smaller share of Hispanic and Asian young adults than in 2000 (75 percent and 52 percent, respectively), both groups are overwhelmingly made up of first- and second-generation Americans.

A third global attribute of millennials, an indicator of racial and ethnic blending, is the pervasiveness of interracial marriages. Interracial marriages have been on the rise, especially over the past three decades.<sup>6</sup> As Table 1 shows, nearly one in seven millennial marriages are interracial—almost three times the share of such marriages among baby boomers at the same age. The impact of the

rise of new minorities is apparent: nearly six in 10 of millennials’ interracial marriages are between white and either Hispanic or Asian partners. Among married millennials involving Hispanics, 35 percent are interracial. For those marriages involving Asians or blacks, about three in 10 are interracial.

### **Marital status and household relationships**

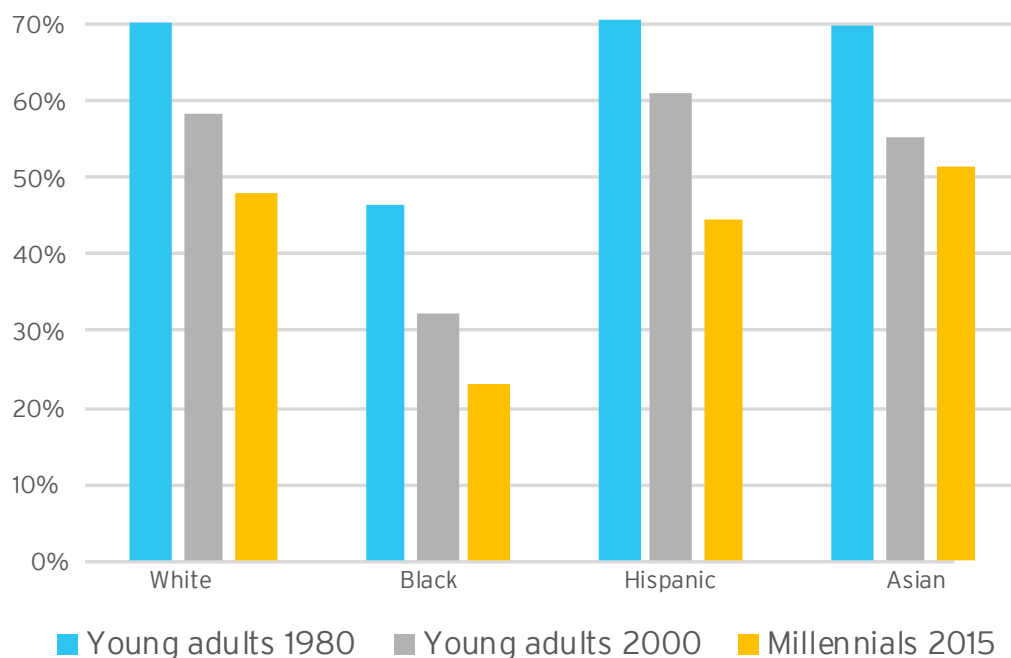
Despite the rise in interracial marriages, millennials are slower than earlier generations to get married, have children, and leave their parents’ homes. The median age of marriage was lowest during the family-friendly 1950s—at age 20 for women and 22 for men. By 2015, these rose to ages 27 and 29, respectively. Allowing longer periods for higher education and rising women’s labor force participation have pushed up the ages of marriage and childbearing over the decades.<sup>7</sup> However, the Great Recession and resulting housing crash led millennials to even further delay these domestic milestones.

The broad pattern toward delay in marriage has been followed by millennials in each racial and ethnic group (see Figure 4). Blacks continue to exhibit the lowest share of 25-34 year-olds who are currently married—halving their share from 47 percent in 1980 to 23 percent—though unmarried partnerships are common among black couples.<sup>8</sup> Just as with the national patterns, long term shifts toward later marriage have been amplified for all groups by recent economic conditions.

Millennials are not only marrying later than young adults in 2000 and 1980, but are also less likely to be household heads or spouses, as many lived in their parental homes or in multifamily dwellings at uncommonly high levels (see Table 1).<sup>9</sup> Still, as shown in Table 2, the majority of older millennials (ages 25 to 34) in each racial-ethnic group are either household heads (including persons living alone) or spouses. White millennials exhibit the largest combined shares of household heads and spouses, while residing with parents, other relatives, and nonrelatives is more prominent for



FIGURE 4

**Percent currently married: Generational differences by race at ages 25-34**

Source: Author's analysis of Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplements

blacks and Hispanics. Fewer blacks are married compared to other race and ethnic groups and more (21 percent) are residing with parents than any other group. Hispanic millennials are most likely to have an “other” relationship to the household head, meaning they could be living with a nonrelative, such as a roommate, or another adult relative.

### Education attainment

One of the long-term trends that continued with millennials is the increase in education attainment, which, for their generation more than others, is tied to higher future earnings and well-being.<sup>10</sup> Here the story is both good and not so good.

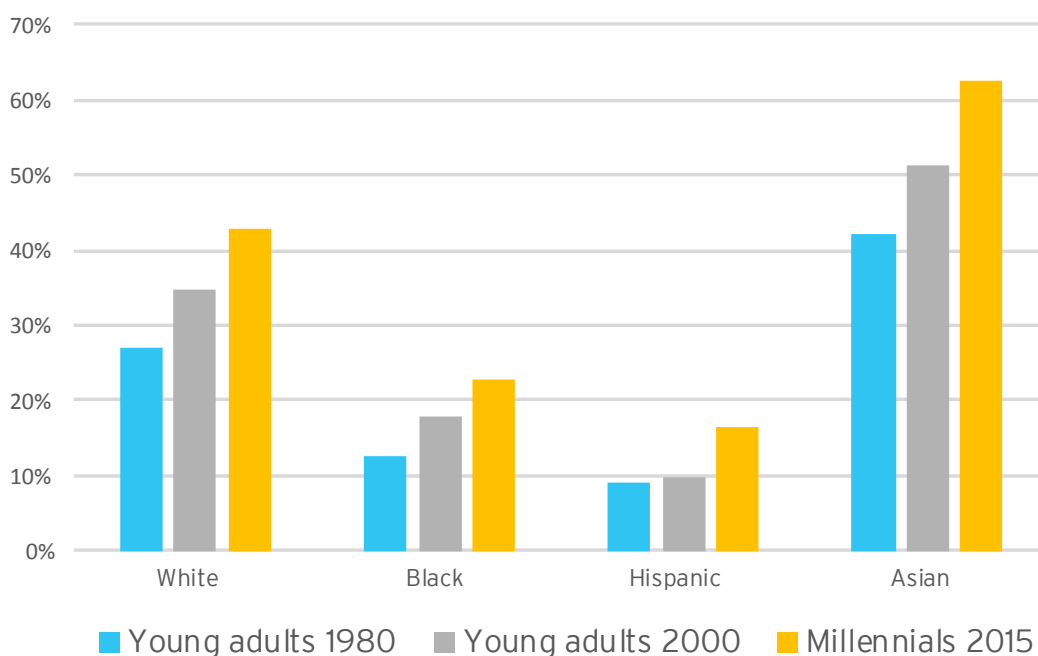
Referring again to Table 1, more than a third of all millennials ages 25-34 achieved college educations by 2015, up from less than 30 percent for comparably aged young adults in 2000 and not quite a quarter for those in 1980. The rise

was especially sharp for millennial women who are more educated at the bachelor's degree level than their male counterparts.

Also on the positive side, postsecondary education attainment has risen for all racial and ethnic young adult groups. As shown in Figure 5, the percentage of people ages 25-34 who received bachelor's degrees or higher rose for whites, blacks, Hispanics, and Asians between 1980 and 2015. There have also been positive changes in related measures such as declines in high school dropout rates and increased college enrollment for all major ethnic groups.<sup>11</sup>

The not-so-good news is the still-sharp disparities in education attainment among these groups, with Hispanic and black millennials falling behind their Asian and white counterparts. While there is variation across geographic areas in these measures (discussed below), the lower education attainment of many black and Hispanic millennials arises, in part, from poorer

FIGURE 5

**Percent currently college graduates: Generational differences by race at ages 25-34**

Source: Author's analysis of Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplements

preparation in underfunded, segregated school systems along with inadequate advice and career counseling.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, blacks and Hispanics especially have been more likely to enroll in two-year colleges and less selective four-year colleges and have lower rates of completion.<sup>13</sup> These two groups are also disproportionately represented among the nation's "disconnected youth"—young adults who are neither working nor going to school.<sup>14</sup>

Finally, for this generation, postsecondary education has come at the cost of significant student loan debt. The Great Recession, which began as the first millennials turned 27, led many millennials to choose higher education as an alternative to labor force participation. Covering the costs of expensive tuition during a time when fewer family resources may have been available placed many millennials in debt only to return to a job market that was tepidly coming back to normal.<sup>15</sup>

### Homeownership

While the recession and its aftermath have given millennials a late start on careers and family formation, the housing bust has affected their short-term, and potentially long-term, ability to buy homes. Nationally, homeownership rates have not shown long-term declines. They stayed relatively stable since the 1960s except for a housing boom from the late 1990s through 2006. The subsequent housing bust occurred just before most millennials entered the market.<sup>16</sup> This tamped down their homeownership rate compared with young adults at earlier ages, as high interest rates, a reluctance to buy, and debt or low savings prompted many millennials to live with relatives or move to rental housing. This delay in homeownership may be robbing millennials of a head start toward a traditional means of wealth accumulation.

## “This delay in homeownership may be robbing millennials of a head start toward a traditional means of wealth accumulation.”

All racial groups registered recent housing-bust-related declines in homeownership, but this was especially the case for blacks who, along with many Hispanics, bore the brunt of fewer lower-cost, subprime loans amid a deficit of resources.<sup>17</sup> Both groups have generally exhibited lower homeownership rates than whites and Asians, but the divide for blacks especially has widened more recently.<sup>18</sup> Thus for older millennials in 2015, there were still sharp disparities in homeownership across racial groups, ranging from 56 percent for whites to 33 percent for blacks—with Asians, at 43 percent, and Hispanics, at 37 percent, in the middle.

The prospects for greater homeownership are less encouraging than in the past for each racial-ethnic groups but especially for blacks and Hispanics. Those in the latter groups are less well-equipped in light of their higher poverty and unemployment levels, though those rates have receded recently.<sup>19</sup>

### Financial security

While the economy and employment have climbed back from the worst of the recession and post-recession years, as late as 2015, millennials were still more likely to be in poverty than most baby boomers and Gen Xers at similar ages (see Table 1).

Both postsecondary education and homeownership are important markers of

financial security for millennials. The former represents a pathway to a higher lifetime earnings trajectory, and the latter has been a key component of wealth appreciation. Yet each has been more difficult to attain for blacks and Hispanics, even before the recession and post-recession period.

One impediment to both postsecondary education and homeownership is the lack of accumulated savings and low credit among blacks and Hispanics. Compared with whites, both groups, as potential students and homebuyers, are less likely to obtain financial support from family members and, in fact, are often relied upon to send money back to their parents.<sup>20</sup>

A 2017 GenForward Survey of millennials of different racial-ethnic groups found that blacks and Hispanics, in particular, consistently report more economic vulnerability than whites or Asians—and experience less of a likelihood of financial assistance from a family member for college tuition or student debt relief.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, it has been estimated that the loss of wealth resulting from the foreclosure crisis between 2007 and 2009 disproportionately affected black and Hispanic families, making them less able to provide support for their own and their children's education and home purchases.<sup>22</sup>

Because racial minorities already compose roughly half of the nation's K-12 public school students and are projected to make up ever greater shares of the nation's potential homebuyers,<sup>23</sup> it is important to monitor the success of different segments of the highly diverse millennial generation as they forge a bridge to the next generation.



## Where are millennials living?

There is wide variation among metropolitan areas in terms of the size and growth of their millennial populations. This section presents statistics for the nation's 100 largest metropolitan areas and 50 states on growth and share of their millennial populations and their racial and ethnic compositions. It also examines recent changes and attributes of the millennial populations residing in urban core and suburban counties for the nation.

### **Growth and share of millennials in metropolitan areas and states**

The young adult population ages 18-34 grew nationally by 4.7 percent from 2010 to 2015. This represents gains from immigration and the aging of younger millennials into the 18-34 age bracket during that time.<sup>24</sup> However, this pattern of young adult growth differs across metropolitan areas and states in terms of the extent to which: (1) they attract immigrants; (2) young millennials age into the 18-34 age bracket; and (3) these areas gain or lose domestic migrants with other parts of the U.S. The combination of these components yields the overall young adult growth rate for a given metropolitan area or state.

Map 1 displays the metropolitan areas, among the nation's 100 largest, that had the highest and lowest young adult growth in 2010-2015. Each of the 10 fastest-growing areas, with growth rates exceeding 10 percent, was located in the South or West. Two (Colorado Springs and Denver) are located in Colorado, three (San Antonio, Austin,

and Houston) are in Texas, and another three (Orlando, Cape Coral, and North Port-Sarasota) are in Florida. Rounding out the list are Honolulu and Seattle.

Several of these areas, including Houston, Denver, Austin, and Seattle, are well-known millennial magnets in that they attracted large numbers of older millennial migrants in 2010-2015.<sup>25</sup>

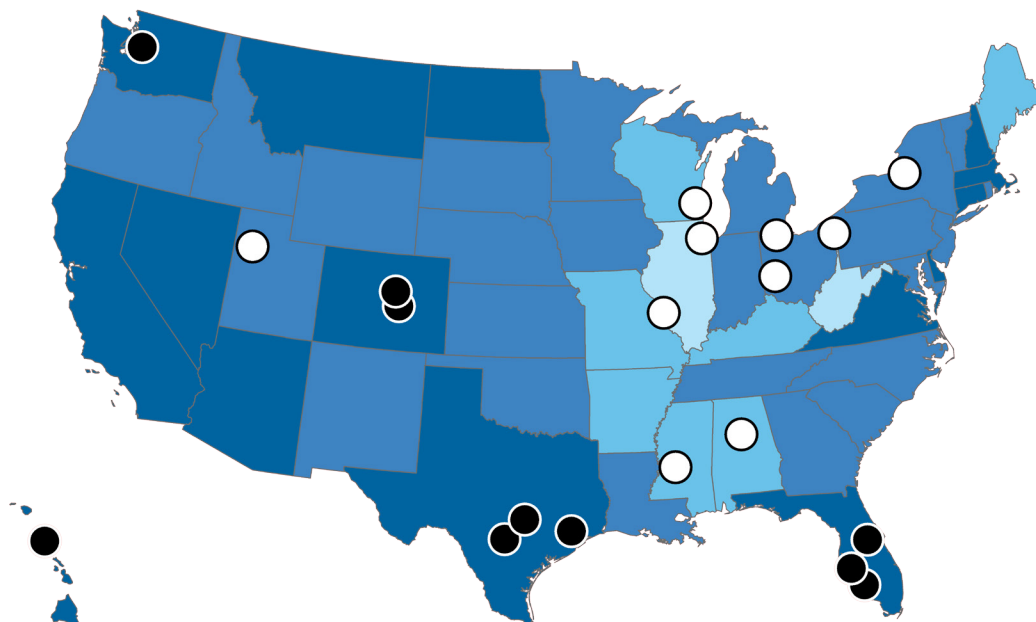
Only one metropolitan area—Birmingham, Ala.—exhibited a decline in young adults. Most of the other areas with the lowest young adult growth are located in the industrial north and Midwest and include Ohio cities Toledo, Youngstown, and Dayton, along with Chicago, St. Louis, Milwaukee, and Syracuse, N.Y. Also on this list are Salt Lake City and Jackson, Miss.

States also vary in their rates of young adult growth. The state with the fastest growth was North Dakota, which experienced an energy-driven economic boom in the first half of the decade. Others in the more rapidly growing group are mostly in the South or West, including the large states of California, Texas, and Florida. Outside those regions, other faster-growing states were Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Connecticut, increasing by more than 5 percent from 2010 to 2015.

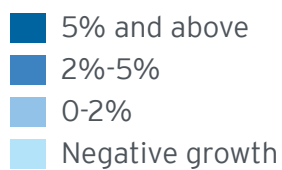
Two states, West Virginia and Illinois, registered losses of young adults in 2010-2015, and seven others, mostly in the middle of the country, showed growth of less than 2 percent. These

## Young adult growth and decline

2010-2015



### States



### Metros

Highest growth

Lowest growth

|                  |       |                |       |
|------------------|-------|----------------|-------|
| Colorado Springs | 14.7% | Birmingham     | -0.6% |
| San Antonio      | 14.4% | Chicago        | 0.2%  |
| Denver           | 12.8% | Toledo         | 0.5%  |
| Orlando          | 12.7% | St. Louis      | 0.9%  |
| Honolulu         | 12.2% | Youngstown     | 1.0%  |
| Austin           | 11.8% | Jackson        | 1.2%  |
| Cape Coral, FL   | 11.7% | Milwaukee      | 1.4%  |
| Houston          | 11.7% | Syracuse       | 1.5%  |
| Sarasota         | 11.1% | Dayton         | 1.7%  |
| Seattle          | 10.8% | Salt Lake City | 1.9%  |

Source: Author's analysis of U.S. Census population estimates

include Mississippi, Alabama, Arkansas, Kentucky, Missouri, and Wisconsin, along with, in New England, Maine. With the young adult population growing at 4.7 percent nationally, these states are drawing fewer millennials than others.

Millennials composed 23.4 percent of the national population in 2015, but this share varies widely across metropolitan areas and states. Table 3 lists metropolitan areas with highest and lowest shares of millennials.

Millennials as a share of metropolitan area populations range from 30.4 percent for Provo, Utah, to just 15.9 percent in North Port-Sarasota, Fla. The 15 metropolitan areas with the highest shares of millennials are all in the fast-growing South and West, with the exception of Madison, a university town and state capital—an attribute it has in common with Austin, which has the second-highest millennial share. Four of the areas with the highest shares are in California: San Diego, Bakersfield, Fresno, and Los Angeles.

Metropolitan areas with the lowest millennial shares tend to be in Florida – where millennials are sometimes crowded out by older generations – and in the Northeast and Midwest. Included among the first group are Cape Coral, Palm Bay, Deltona-Daytona Beach, Tampa, Lakeland, and Miami. Among those in the last group are Ohio cities Youngstown, Bridgeport, and Cleveland, Detroit, and the Pennsylvania areas of Allentown, Scranton, and Pittsburgh.

The District of Columbia, an attractive city for young adults that is shown along with states, is a whopping 34.8 percent millennial. North Dakota and Alaska lead all states with high millennial shares of 27.5 and 27.2 percent, respectively, a list which also includes the large states of California (25 percent), Texas (24.7 percent), and New York (24.4 percent). States with lowest shares, beginning with Maine at 20 percent, are mostly in the Northeast and Midwest with the exception of West Virginia and Florida.

Overall, with a few exceptions, the South and West “Sun Belt” areas tend to show the highest growth and largest shares of millennials, while those in the North and West “Snow Belt” areas are more likely to register low growth and smaller millennial shares of their populations.

### **Racial and ethnic diversity among metropolitan areas and states**

The racial and ethnic diversity that is a hallmark of the millennial generation varies widely across the nation’s metropolitan areas and states (see Appendix A). Among the 100 largest metropolitan areas, McAllen, Texas, at 4 percent white among millennials, is the most diverse. Thirty of these areas are “minority white,” including Miami at 25 percent white and Houston at 32 percent. Several California areas (Los Angeles, Riverside, San Jose, Stockton, Fresno, and Bakersfield) are less than one-third white. Other notable metropolitan areas where whites constitute a minority of millennials are New York, Atlanta, and Chicago.

An additional 18 metropolitan areas have millennial populations that are less than 60 percent white, including Tampa, Philadelphia, Charlotte, and Seattle. In fact, of all the largest 100 metropolitan areas, only four—Knoxville, Tenn.; Provo, Utah; Pittsburgh; and Spokane, Wash—house millennial populations where whites exceed 80 percent.

The mix of racial and ethnic minorities among millennials also varies widely across metropolitan areas, as shown in Figure 6. In Los Angeles, Hispanics compose nearly half of the millennial population, with Asians making up 15 percent and blacks only 7 percent. Among New York and Chicago millennials, the combined black and Asian millennial populations approximately equal the number of Hispanics. In Atlanta, Charlotte, N.C., and Detroit, blacks are the largest minority group among millennials.

Table 4 lists, for each racial and ethnic group, the metropolitan areas that house the largest



TABLE 3

### Highest and lowest shares of millennials, 2015: Large metropolitan areas and states

| Highest shares of millennials |                      |                 | Lowest shares of millennials |                 |
|-------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------|------------------------------|-----------------|
| Rank                          |                      | Share (percent) |                              | Share (percent) |
| <b>Metropolitan areas*</b>    |                      |                 |                              |                 |
| 1                             | Provo-Orem, UT       | 30.4            | North Port-Sarasota          | 15.9            |
| 2                             | Austin               | 27.2            | Cape Coral, FL               | 18.0            |
| 3                             | San Diego            | 27.0            | Palm Bay, FL                 | 18.7            |
| 4                             | Virginia Beach       | 26.9            | Deltona-Daytona Beach        | 18.8            |
| 5                             | Madison, WI          | 26.8            | Youngstown                   | 19.9            |
| 6                             | Colorado Springs     | 26.4            | Bridgeport, CT               | 20.7            |
| 7                             | Bakersfield          | 26.3            | Winston-Salem                | 20.9            |
| 8                             | Honolulu             | 26.3            | Allentown, PA                | 21.1            |
| 9                             | Salt Lake City       | 26.2            | Tampa                        | 21.2            |
| 10                            | Baton Rouge          | 26.1            | Scranton                     | 21.2            |
| 11                            | El Paso              | 26.0            | Cleveland                    | 21.2            |
| 12                            | Fresno               | 25.8            | Lakeland, FL                 | 21.2            |
| 13                            | Columbia, SC         | 25.4            | Detroit                      | 21.6            |
| 14                            | Los Angeles          | 25.4            | Pittsburgh                   | 21.6            |
| 15                            | Charleston           | 25.4            | Miami                        | 22.0            |
| <b>States</b>                 |                      |                 |                              |                 |
| 1.                            | District of Columbia | 34.8            | Maine                        | 20.0            |
| 2.                            | North Dakota         | 27.5            | West Virginia                | 20.8            |
| 3.                            | Alaska               | 27.2            | New Hampshire                | 21.4            |
| 4.                            | Utah                 | 26.1            | Florida                      | 21.6            |
| 5.                            | California           | 25.0            | New Jersey                   | 21.7            |
| 6.                            | Colorado             | 24.8            | Connecticut                  | 22.1            |
| 7.                            | Texas                | 24.7            | Ohio                         | 22.1            |
| 8.                            | Hawaii               | 24.6            | Michigan                     | 22.3            |
| 9.                            | New York             | 24.4            | Vermont                      | 22.3            |
| 10.                           | Rhode Island         | 24.3            | Wisconsin                    | 22.4            |

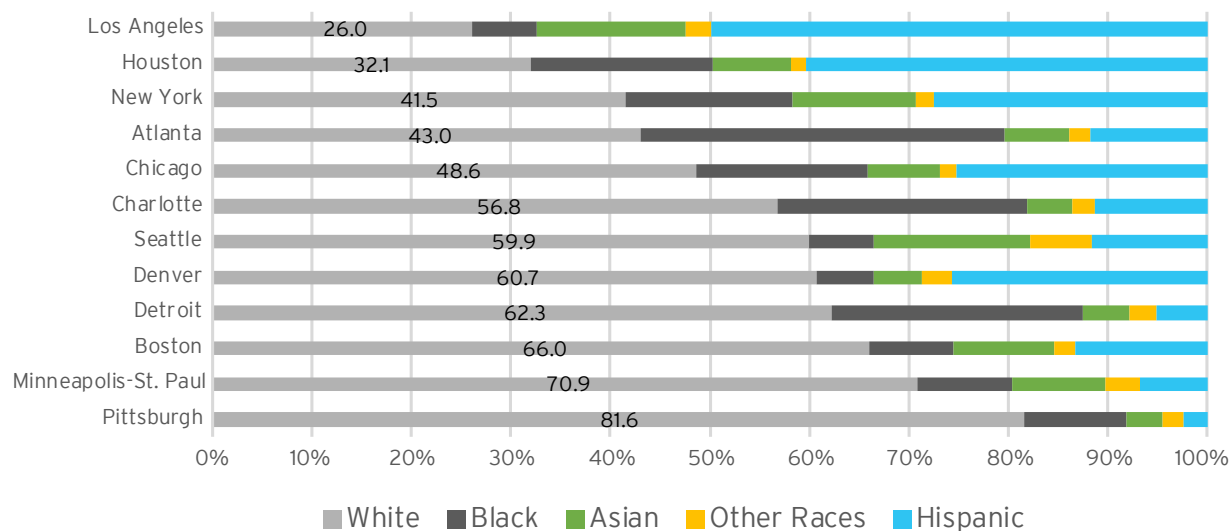
\*Among the 100 largest metropolitan areas. Names are abbreviated.

Source: Author's analysis of U.S. Census population estimates

FIGURE 6

**Millennial race-ethnic makeup in selected metropolitan areas**

2015



Source: Author's analysis of U.S. Census population estimates

millennial population for that group and the areas that showed the greatest young adult gains between 2010 and 2015. While there is some overlap, there are clearly some differences in the settlement and gain patterns for racial and ethnic minority groups.

The largest white millennial settlements are in the biggest metropolitan areas—New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles—as well as Philadelphia, Boston, Dallas, and Washington, D.C. However, when it comes to recent gains in the young adult population, there is a South and West bias among whites—with Texas areas Houston and Dallas among the top three gainers (Denver ranking second), and Seattle, San Francisco, and Nashville in the top six. New York, ranking seventh, rounds out the list.

The largest black millennial settlement and young adult gain areas have a distinctly Southern bent. In keeping with its role as a top destination over the past several decades in the black reverse migration back to the South,<sup>26</sup> Atlanta ranks first in black young adult gains and second in the

size of black millennial settlement. (It does not appear on either list for other groups.) Other metropolitan areas that saw black young adult gain are Dallas, Houston, Washington, D.C., and Miami in the South, as well as New York and Philadelphia.

Both Hispanic and Asian millennials share New York and Los Angeles as major settlement areas. Beyond that, they differ somewhat with Hispanic millennials being more numerous in Southern areas—Houston, Miami, and Dallas—along with Riverside, Calif., and Chicago. Asian millennial settlements take more of a Western bent with San Francisco, San Jose, Calif., and Seattle among the top seven, which also includes Chicago and Washington, D.C. In general, Hispanics settle more often in Southern areas, while Asians do so in the West. New York, Los Angeles, and Houston are top gainers among both groups.

Quite a few states exhibit more diversity in their millennial populations than the national numbers show, as indicated by Map 2.



TABLE 4

**Metropolitan areas with largest number of millennials, 2015, and young adult gains, 2010-2015 race-ethnic groups**

| Largest number of millennials 2015 |                |           | Greatest young adult gains 2010-15* |        |
|------------------------------------|----------------|-----------|-------------------------------------|--------|
| Rank                               | Area**         | Size      | Area**                              | Gain   |
| <b>WHITES</b>                      |                |           |                                     |        |
| 1                                  | New York       | 1,995,732 | Houston                             | 46,785 |
| 2                                  | Chicago        | 1,104,304 | Denver                              | 43,368 |
| 3                                  | Los Angeles    | 882,851   | Dallas                              | 31,965 |
| 4                                  | Philadelphia   | 813,308   | Seattle                             | 31,930 |
| 5                                  | Boston         | 774,846   | San Francisco                       | 28,950 |
| 6                                  | Dallas         | 720,776   | Nashville                           | 27,982 |
| 7                                  | Washington, DC | 652,577   | New York                            | 26,973 |
| <b>BLACKS</b>                      |                |           |                                     |        |
| 1                                  | New York       | 808,252   | Atlanta                             | 53,666 |
| 2                                  | Atlanta        | 488,678   | Dallas                              | 41,331 |
| 3                                  | Chicago        | 392,556   | Houston                             | 40,107 |
| 4                                  | Washington, DC | 370,210   | New York                            | 31,969 |
| 5                                  | Miami          | 321,799   | Washington, DC                      | 29,682 |
| 6                                  | Philadelphia   | 316,683   | Miami                               | 29,540 |
| 7                                  | Houston        | 300,845   | Philadelphia                        | 20,856 |
| <b>HISPANICS</b>                   |                |           |                                     |        |
| 1                                  | Los Angeles    | 1,689,364 | Riverside                           | 76,029 |
| 2                                  | New York       | 1,326,722 | Los Angeles                         | 55,237 |
| 3                                  | Houston        | 665,537   | Miami                               | 51,961 |
| 4                                  | Riverside      | 633,619   | Houston                             | 48,875 |
| 5                                  | Miami          | 607,635   | San Antonio                         | 45,663 |
| 6                                  | Chicago        | 571,674   | New York                            | 43,017 |
| 7                                  | Dallas         | 553,216   | Orlando                             | 38,923 |
| <b>ASIANS</b>                      |                |           |                                     |        |
| 1                                  | New York       | 595,604   | New York                            | 63,306 |
| 2                                  | Los Angeles    | 508,470   | San Francisco                       | 46,963 |
| 3                                  | San Francisco  | 300,108   | Los Angeles                         | 35,851 |
| 4                                  | Chicago        | 164,969   | Houston                             | 29,759 |
| 5                                  | San Jose       | 164,208   | Seattle                             | 29,173 |
| 6                                  | Washington, DC | 154,516   | Dallas                              | 27,314 |
| 7                                  | Seattle        | 147,279   | San Jose                            | 22,504 |

\* 2010-15 change in age 18-34 year old population of group

\*\* Metropolitan area names are abbreviated.

Source: Author's analysis of U.S. Census population estimates

In California, less than one-third of millennials are white, and more than 60 percent are new minorities. Racial and ethnic minorities make up more than half of the millennial populations in 10 states, including Texas, Arizona, Florida, Georgia, and New Jersey. In another 10 states, including New York, Illinois, Virginia, and North and South Carolina, minorities comprise more than 40 percent of millennial residents. Other states have “whiter” millennial populations, but only nine states are home to largely (over 80 percent) white millennial populations, including Wyoming, Iowa, West Virginia, and Maine.

The future young adult population will become diverse in more states when the post-millennial population replaces millennials. Fourteen states are now home to “minority white” under-18

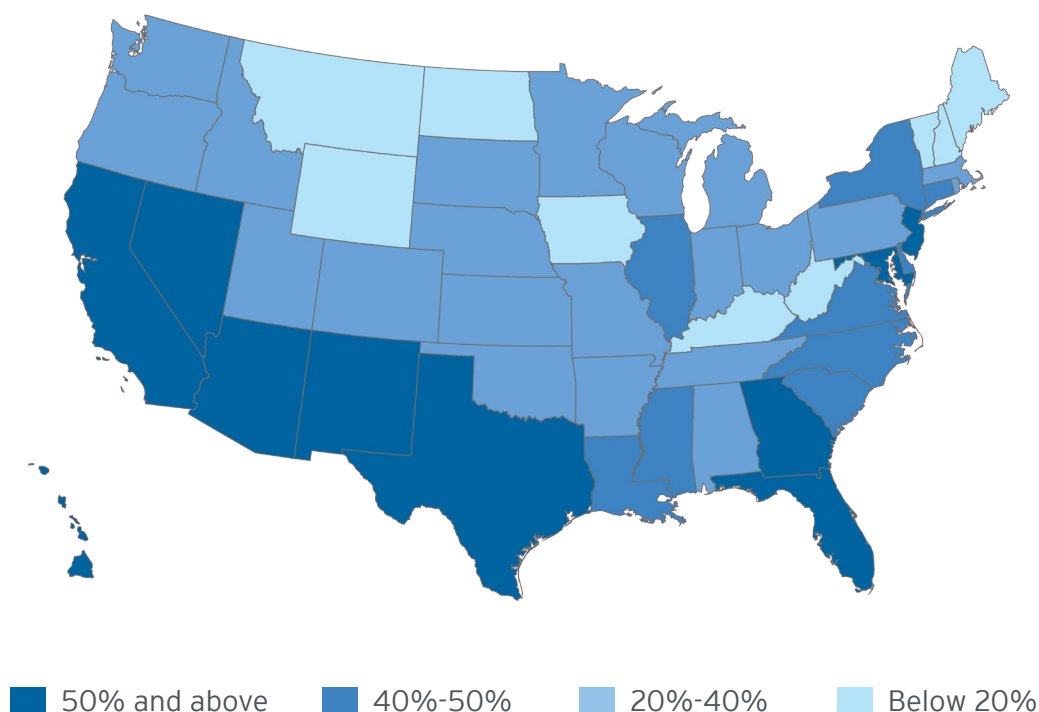
populations. In California, nearly three-quarters of post-millennials are minorities; in Texas it is two-thirds. Overall, 25 states are home to post-millennial populations that are more than 40 percent minority, and in only four (New Hampshire, Maine, West Virginia, and Vermont) is this generation largely white.

### **Millennials in urban cores, suburbs, and exurbs**

There is much discussion of millennials being attracted to cities as a combination of generational preferences and the slowdown in the suburban housing market. While not all cities have benefited from renewed urban growth, this phenomenon clearly came to light during the first part of this decade.<sup>27</sup>

MAP 2

### **States showing greatest percentage of minorities among millennials**



Source: Author's analysis of U.S. Census population estimates

TABLE 5

**Millennial profiles of urban suburban categories\*, large metropolitan areas, 2015**

| Social and demographic profiles                      | Urban core | Mature suburbs | Emerging suburbs | Exurbs |
|------------------------------------------------------|------------|----------------|------------------|--------|
| <b>Millennial share of population 2015</b>           | 24.7       | 23.6           | 22.7             | 20.9   |
| <b>Millennial racial composition (percent), 2015</b> |            |                |                  |        |
| White#                                               | 41.8       | 51.9           | 61.7             | 72.3   |
| Black#                                               | 18.3       | 13.7           | 10.2             | 10.5   |
| Hispanic                                             | 26.2       | 24.6           | 20.9             | 12.9   |
| Asian and Other#                                     | 13.7       | 9.8            | 7.2              | 4.3    |
| Total                                                | 100.0      | 100.0          | 100.0            | 100.0  |
| <b>Young adult growth 2010-15</b>                    | 4.9        | 6.9            | 7.9              | 5.0    |

\* Based on classification of metropolitan counties devised by Brookings Institution

# Pertains to non-Hispanic members of racial group

Source: Author's analysis of U.S. Census Bureau population estimates

It is, therefore, useful to examine the racial-ethnic aspects of millennial presence in urban cores and outer parts of large metropolitan areas. Table 5 provides some insights by looking at the millennial residence and 2010-15 young adult growth for urban core and suburban county categories—mature suburbs, emerging suburbs and exurbs—based on population density, within the nation's largest metropolitan areas.<sup>28</sup>

Millennials make up a modestly higher share, at 24.7 percent, of urban core county populations than is the case for each of the suburban categories. This is to be expected, because many suburban areas have more middle-aged and child populations as a result of the suburbanization of families from earlier generations.

What is noteworthy is the racial and ethnic differences among millennials residing in each urban category. Millennial populations living in urban cores are decidedly more diverse, at just 41.8 percent white, than those in each suburban category. More than a quarter of urban core millennials are Hispanics, and nearly another third are represented by the other minority groups.

Suburban categories get less diverse as distance from the core increases. Mature, largely inner-suburb millennials are only slightly less white—51.9 percent—than the national millennial population. But in emerging suburbs and exurbs, whites are far more prevalent at 61.7 percent and 72.3 percent, respectively.

The growth of young adults, ages 18-34, is somewhat higher in each of the suburban categories than the urban core. Not all of this growth is due to migration and, especially in the suburbs, it is partly due to younger millennials aging into the 18 to 34 year old young adult category over the 2010-15 period. Nonetheless, these rates show that the young adult population has been growing in all parts of the metropolitan area.

To the extent that young adult populations—millennials or post-millennials—continue to

grow in urban cores, they will have a strong racial-ethnic dimension. Additional analyses of the 2010-15 growth rates indicate that fully 87 percent of millennial urban core growth is attributable to racial and ethnic minorities, compared with their contributions of 78, 67, and 66 percent, respectively, to the millennial growth rates of mature suburbs, emerging suburbs, and exurbs. This suggests that the more racially diverse post-millennial generation may lead to even greater growth and diversity for young adult populations in each part of the metropolitan area and especially in urban cores.



## How do millennials differ on education and poverty across metropolitan areas and states?

Educational attainment and poverty are two significant measures of how millennials, as young adults, are likely to contribute to economic outcomes in metropolitan areas and states. The former is an indicator of their human capital potential. The latter is an indicator of their economic needs. The sections below show how older millennials, ages 25-34, differ on these measures across the 100 largest metropolitan areas and 50 states.<sup>29</sup>

### Education

Education attainment, as measured by the percentage of older millennials with at least a college degree, varies across metropolitan areas, from 58 percent for Boston to 14 percent for Bakersfield, Calif. Those areas with the greatest percentages of millennial college graduates, aside from Boston, are Madison; San Jose, Calif.; San Francisco; Washington, D.C.; Hartford, Conn.; New York; Raleigh, N.C.; Minneapolis-St. Paul; and Denver (see Map 3). In each of these, as well as Austin and Seattle, more than 45 percent of older millennials graduated from college.

While a great deal of attention is given to the highly educated millennials in those areas, the fact is that older millennials in 60 of the 100 metropolitan areas have college graduate percentages ranging between 30 to 45 percent; and in 28 areas, the percentages are less than 30. Among large metropolitan areas in the latter

category are Phoenix, Las Vegas, San Antonio, and Riverside, Calif. In fact, those areas with the lowest percentage of millennial college graduates—below 25 percent—include other interior California areas of Bakersfield, Stockton, and Fresno; the Florida areas of Lakeland, Cape Coral, and North Port-Sarasota; as well as McAllen, Texas and Spokane, Wash.

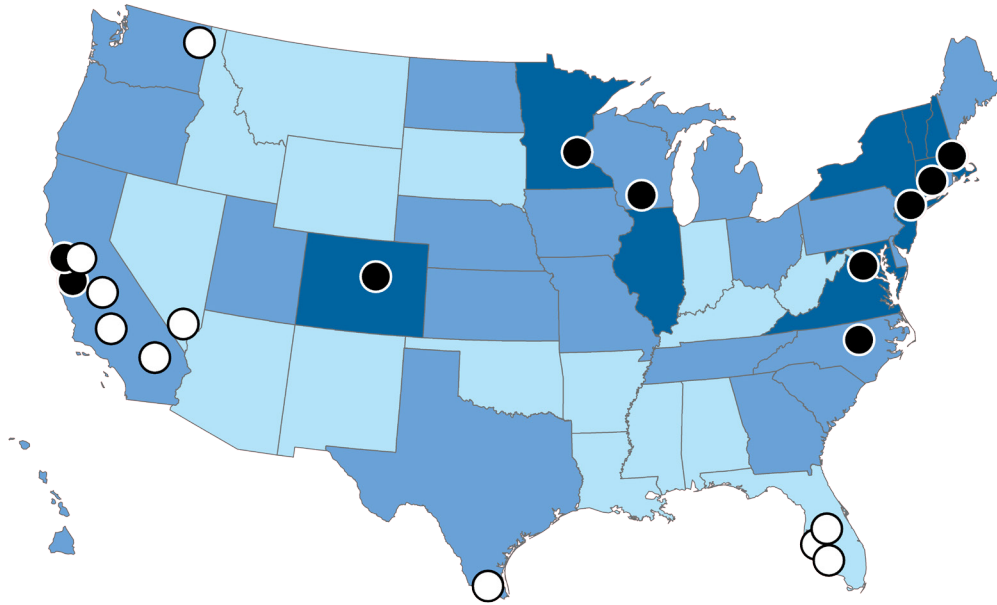
Map 3 also depicts state variations in education attainment. Those states that are home to the most educated older millennials are largely in the Northeast and on the Eastern Seaboard, led by Massachusetts, where 51 percent hold college degrees. Highly ranked states outside this region are Minnesota, Illinois, and Colorado.

At the lower end of the millennial education spectrum are states in the Deep South, the Southwest, Appalachia, and the Rocky Mountain region along with Florida, South Dakota, Indiana, and Alaska. Each of these exhibits millennial college graduate percentages of less than 30 percent with Nevada, at 22 percent, registering the lowest.

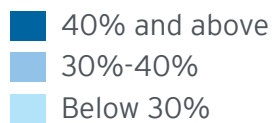
These overall patterns do not necessarily apply to each racial and ethnic group. Table 6 lists metropolitan areas with highest and lowest percentages of college graduates among white, black, Hispanic, and Asian older millennials in metropolitan areas with at least 10,000 older millennials in their respective groups.<sup>30</sup>

## Percent college graduates among older millennials

2015 (ages 25-34)



### States



### Metros

Largest percent

Smallest percent

|                      |     |                     |     |
|----------------------|-----|---------------------|-----|
| Boston               | 58% | Bakersfield         | 14% |
| Madison, WI          | 58% | Stockton            | 17% |
| San Jose             | 55% | Riverside           | 17% |
| San Francisco        | 55% | Fresno              | 18% |
| Washington, D.C.     | 54% | McAllen             | 19% |
| Hartford             | 50% | Lakeland, FL        | 19% |
| New York             | 47% | Cape Coral, FL      | 20% |
| Raleigh              | 47% | Las Vegas           | 21% |
| Minneapolis-St. Paul | 47% | North Port-Sarasota | 24% |
| Denver               | 46% | Spokane             | 24% |

Source: Author's analysis of 2015 American Community Survey

TABLE 6

**Metropolitan areas with highest and lowest percentages of college graduates among older millennials, for race and ethnic groups, 2015**

| Highest percentages of college graduates# |                |         | Lowest percentages of college graduates# |         |
|-------------------------------------------|----------------|---------|------------------------------------------|---------|
| Rank                                      |                | Percent |                                          | Percent |
| <b>WHITES</b>                             |                |         |                                          |         |
| 1                                         | Washington, DC | 69.9    | Stockton                                 | 19.9    |
| 2                                         | San Francisco  | 69.3    | Bakersfield                              | 22.5    |
| 3                                         | Boston         | 65.1    | Lakeland, FL                             | 22.6    |
| 4                                         | Madison, WI    | 63.8    | North Port-Sarasota                      | 24.4    |
| 5                                         | New York       | 63.4    | Cape Coral, FL                           | 24.4    |
| 6                                         | Bridgeport, CT | 62.4    | Deltona-Daytona Beach                    | 25.5    |
| 7                                         | San Jose       | 60.0    | Spokane                                  | 26.1    |
| <b>BLACKS</b>                             |                |         |                                          |         |
| 1                                         | Washington, DC | 35.2    | Milwaukee                                | 6.4     |
| 2                                         | San Francisco  | 32.0    | Akron                                    | 8.7     |
| 3                                         | Boston         | 31.0    | Toledo                                   | 9.3     |
| 4                                         | Hartford       | 30.9    | Las Vegas                                | 11.2    |
| 5                                         | Omaha          | 30.4    | Sacramento                               | 11.4    |
| 6                                         | Charlotte      | 29.9    | Riverside                                | 11.5    |
| 7                                         | Atlanta        | 29.7    | Rochester, NY                            | 11.8    |
| <b>HISPANICS</b>                          |                |         |                                          |         |
| 1                                         | Baltimore      | 30.4    | Memphis                                  | 7.6     |
| 2                                         | Jacksonville   | 28.9    | Bakersfield                              | 7.8     |
| 3                                         | Miami          | 27.8    | Boise                                    | 8.3     |
| 4                                         | Boston         | 26.6    | Stockton                                 | 8.3     |
| 5                                         | Washington, DC | 24.8    | Allentown, PA                            | 8.3     |
| 6                                         | Hartford       | 24.7    | Cleveland                                | 8.6     |
| 7                                         | San Francisco  | 23.8    | Springfield, MA                          | 9.4     |
| <b>ASIANS</b>                             |                |         |                                          |         |
| 1                                         | Raleigh        | 79.9    | Fresno                                   | 22.6    |
| 2                                         | Austin         | 79.7    | Stockton                                 | 34.2    |
| 3                                         | San Jose       | 78.4    | Las Vegas                                | 35.3    |
| 4                                         | Boston         | 77.6    | Honolulu                                 | 43.9    |
| 5                                         | Columbus       | 77.1    | Riverside                                | 44.4    |
| 6                                         | Chicago        | 75.1    | San Antonio                              | 45.1    |
| 7                                         | St. Louis      | 75.0    | Sacramento                               | 46.2    |

\* Among the 100 largest metropolitan areas with greater than 10,000 older millennials in race-ethnic group. Names are abbreviated.

# Ages 25-34

Source: Author's analysis of 2015 American Community Survey



There is a large overlap between the education attainment rankings of white older millennials with the overall rankings presented above, though for whites, Washington, D.C., and San Francisco register the highest college graduate percentages—each exceeding 69 percent. White older millennials with college degrees seem to have a strong affinity for the Eastern Seaboard and the Bay Area in Northern California. Those areas with the lowest college graduate percentages also mirror overall patterns, with a strong interior California and Florida presence.

Rankings for highest college graduate percentages among black older millennials follow those of whites for the top three areas—Washington, D.C., San Francisco, and Boston—suggesting a selective movement of both groups to these strong knowledge-based areas. Also ranking high for blacks are the Southern growth areas of Atlanta and Charlotte, N.C. The list of areas with the lowest percentage of black older millennial college graduates is distinct, leading with the Midwestern areas of Milwaukee, Ohio cities Akron and Toledo. Rochester, N.Y., Las Vegas, and California cities Sacramento and Riverside are also on the list of areas where college graduate percentages, among black older millennials, stood below 12 percent.

The most educated areas for Hispanic older millennials are Baltimore, at 30.4 percent college graduates, along with Jacksonville and Miami in Florida. Yet, four familiar brain-gainers, Boston, Washington, D.C., Hartford, and San Francisco, round out the top seven. The areas with the lowest college graduate percentages are led by Memphis, Tenn., at 7.6 percent. The list also includes two interior California areas, Bakersfield and Stockton; Boise, Idaho; and the industrial cities of Cleveland; Allentown, Pa.; and Springfield, Mass.

The percentages of college graduates among Asian older millennials exceed 75 percent in each of the top-ranking metropolitan areas: a mix of high-tech centers (Austin, San Jose, Calif., and Boston), college towns (Raleigh and Columbus,

Ohio), and Midwestern centers (Chicago and St. Louis). Areas with the lowest percentages are mostly located in interior California (Fresno, Stockton, Riverside, and Sacramento) as well as Las Vegas, Honolulu, and San Antonio.

Millennial human capital, as measured by the presence of college graduates among 25-34 year olds, tends to be “lumpy” in that it varies sharply across the country. This is also the case among the four racial and ethnic groups. Boston is the only metropolitan area that ranked among the top seven college graduate percentages for each group, although Washington, D.C. and San Francisco ranked high for three of the groups. Among areas with low percentages of millennial college graduates, each group listed at least one interior California area, where Stockton was included for three of the groups.

## Poverty

Poverty rates among older millennials also differ widely across metropolitan areas. The highest rate, 31 percent, is registered for McAllen, Texas. San Jose showed the lowest rate at 7 percent. The 10 areas with the highest poverty rates, depicted on Map 4, are located in all parts of the country, including California (Bakersfield, Fresno), Washington (Spokane), Arizona (Tucson), Tennessee (Knoxville), Ohio (Youngstown), Georgia (Augusta), Florida (Cape Coral), and Mississippi (Jackson). These metropolitan areas, along with New Orleans and Dayton, are home to older millennial populations with poverty rates exceeding 20 percent.

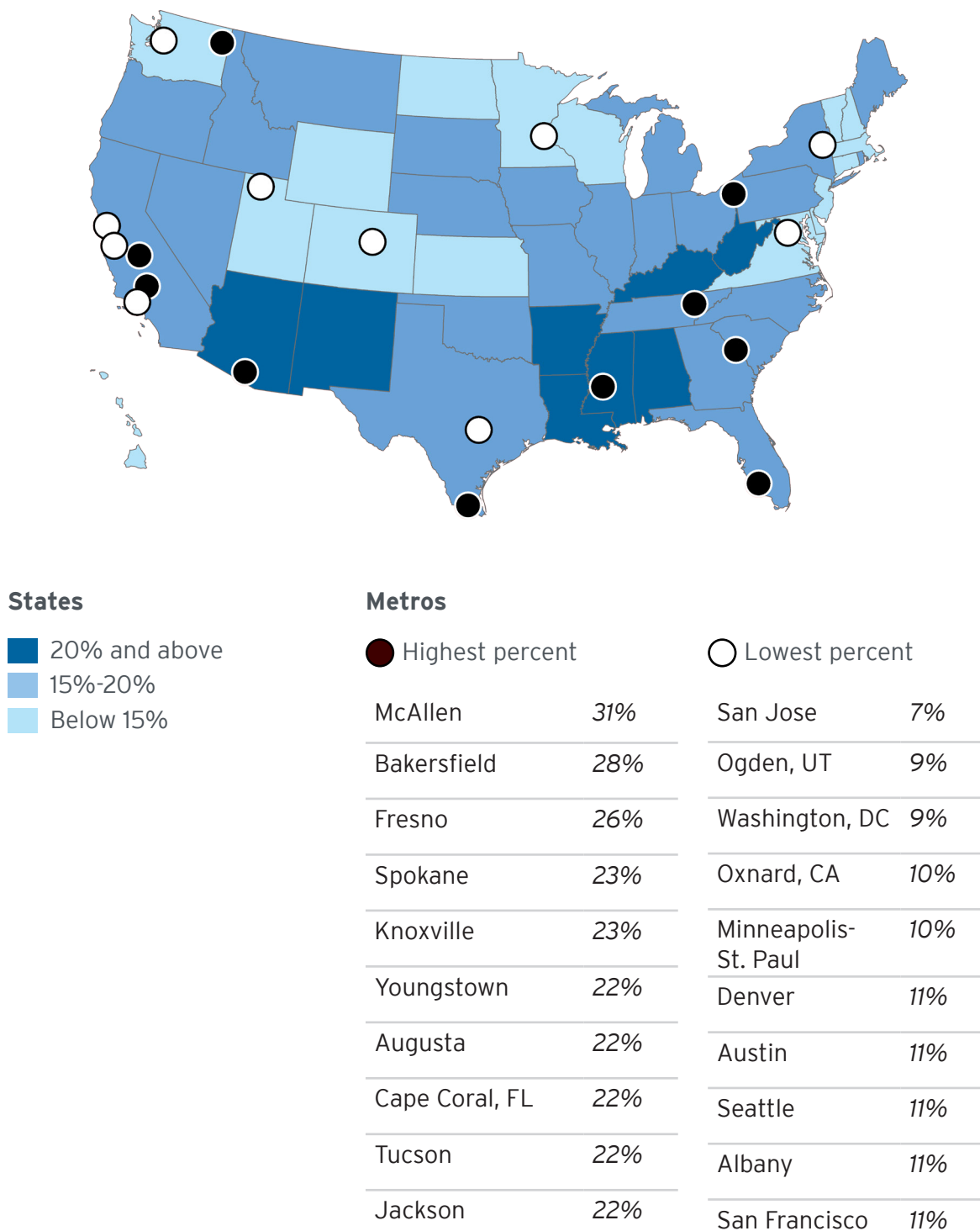
An additional 56 metropolitan areas have older millennial poverty rates ranging from 14 to 20 percent, and 22 areas have rates lower than 14 percent. Among larger areas in the latter group are New York, Nashville, Salt Lake City, and Boston.

The 10 areas with the lowest poverty rates, 11 percent and below, include San Jose, Washington, D.C., Minneapolis-St. Paul, Denver, Austin, Seattle, and San Francisco.



## Percent in poverty among older millennials

2015 (ages 25-34)



Source: Author's analysis of 2015 American Community Survey

TABLE 7

**Metropolitan areas with highest and lowest poverty rates among older millennials, for race and ethnic groups, 2015**

| Highest poverty rates# |                     |      | Lowest poverty rates# |      |
|------------------------|---------------------|------|-----------------------|------|
| Rank                   |                     | Rate |                       | Rate |
| <b>WHITES</b>          |                     |      |                       |      |
| 1                      | Spokane             | 22.3 | Minneapolis-St. Paul  | 5.9  |
| 2                      | Knoxville           | 20.8 | Bridgeport, CT        | 6.1  |
| 3                      | Bakersfield         | 20.4 | Allentown, PA         | 6.1  |
| 4                      | Tucson              | 19.4 | Milwaukee             | 6.3  |
| 5                      | Youngstown          | 19.3 | San Jose              | 6.4  |
| 6                      | Cape Coral, FL      | 18.9 | Ogden, UT             | 6.7  |
| 7                      | Augusta, GA         | 17.4 | Hartford              | 7.1  |
| <b>BLACKS</b>          |                     |      |                       |      |
| 1                      | Portland OR         | 42.7 | Washington, D.C.      | 14.2 |
| 2                      | Dayton              | 40.8 | Lakeland, FL          | 14.6 |
| 3                      | Pittsburgh          | 40.7 | Winston-Salem         | 16.8 |
| 4                      | Toledo              | 39.3 | Boston                | 17.0 |
| 5                      | Cleveland           | 37.2 | San Antonio           | 17.1 |
| 6                      | Akron               | 36.0 | Orlando               | 17.3 |
| 7                      | New Haven           | 33.5 | Providence            | 18.1 |
| <b>HISPANICS</b>       |                     |      |                       |      |
| 1                      | Rochester, NY       | 37.5 | San Jose              | 8.6  |
| 2                      | North Port-Sarasota | 36.5 | Washington, D.C.      | 10.9 |
| 3                      | Raleigh             | 35.2 | Richmond              | 12.5 |
| 4                      | Cincinnati          | 33.7 | Colorado Springs      | 12.5 |
| 5                      | Fresno              | 32.7 | Oxnard, CA            | 12.6 |
| 6                      | Bakersfield         | 31.8 | Austin                | 13.2 |
| 7                      | Cape Coral, FL      | 31.1 | Ogden, UT             | 13.9 |
| <b>ASIANS</b>          |                     |      |                       |      |
| 1                      | Salt Lake City      | 29.1 | Washington, D.C.      | 4.5  |
| 2                      | Pittsburgh          | 28.4 | Seattle               | 5.3  |
| 3                      | Columbus            | 24.2 | San Jose              | 5.5  |
| 4                      | Kansas City         | 22.5 | Jacksonville, FL      | 6.6  |
| 5                      | Fresno              | 19.1 | Austin                | 7.1  |
| 6                      | Cleveland           | 18.2 | Orlando               | 7.3  |
| 7                      | Providence          | 17.8 | Phoenix               | 7.8  |

\* Among the 100 largest metropolitan areas with greater than 10,000 older millennials in race-ethnic group. Names are abbreviated.

# Ages 25-34

Source: Author's analysis of 2015 American Community Survey

State variations in older millennial poverty show the highest rates in the Deep South, led by Mississippi at 26 percent, along with states in the Southwest and the Appalachian states of Kentucky and West Virginia. New Hampshire, at 11 percent, registered the lowest millennial poverty rate. Other states with low rates are located in New England, some on the Eastern Seaboard, and in the Midwest, and Mountain West.

As with education, the overall metropolitan rankings for poverty among older millennials differ somewhat for each racial and ethnic group. Table 7 lists the poverty rate rankings, both highest and lowest, for white, black, Hispanic, and Asian older millennials.

The metropolitan areas with the highest poverty rates for white older millennials are similar to those of the overall high poverty ranks; however, for whites, Spokane stands at the top at 22.3 percent. Areas that rank lowest on white poverty rates, led by Minneapolis-St. Paul with 5.9 percent, also include several that are on the overall list, plus Bridgeport, Allentown, Milwaukee, and Hartford.

The areas with high millennial poverty rates among blacks are distinct from those of whites.

Led by Portland, Ore., with a rate of 42.7 percent, others are industrial areas in Ohio (Dayton, Toledo, Cleveland, and Akron) and Pennsylvania (Pittsburgh) as well as New Haven, Conn. Areas with the lowest poverty rates for blacks are mostly in the South, led by Washington, D.C., with a rate of 14.2 percent.

Aside from Fresno and Bakersfield, areas with the highest poverty rates among Hispanic older millennials are in the eastern part of the U.S., including Rochester, N.Y., Raleigh, and Cincinnati, as well as two Florida areas (North Port-Sarasota and Cape Coral). Areas with the lowest poverty rates include the tech-knowledge economy centers of San Jose, Washington, D.C., and Austin, as well as Richmond, Va.; Colorado Springs, Oxnard, Calif. and Ogden, Utah—all with rates below 14 percent.

Highest poverty rates for Asian older millennials span the country, from the West (Salt Lake City and Fresno); to the center (Kansas City, Mo., Columbus, Cleveland, and Pittsburgh); to New England (Providence, R.I.). Yet as with Hispanics, the lowest poverty rates for Asian older millennials concentrate in tech-knowledge economy centers (Washington, D.C., Seattle, San Jose, Austin) as well as Phoenix, Jacksonville, and Orlando.



## How will millennials serve as a “bridge” across generations?

Much has been written about the differences between millennials and older generations on a variety of attitudinal and demographic measures.<sup>31</sup> They are the first generation to fully embrace social media, they are more socially liberal in favoring abortion rights, same-sex marriage, interracial marriage, and marijuana legalization. They are also more likely than older generations to eschew traditional institutions such as government, political parties, and organized religion.

These distinctions between millennials and their elders harken back to the generation gaps of the 1960s, associated with divides between activist and socially rebellious baby boomers who resisted long-standing traditions of their World War II-era parents. Yet beyond these generational differences on social conventions and attitudes is a more fundamental cultural gap between millennials and the generations before them. It is related to their distinctly different racial and ethnic makeup.

### **Millennials and the cultural generation gap**

As shown in Figure 2, millennials are the most racially and ethnically diverse generation to pass through these young adult ages and, in light of the aging of the white population, will be followed by an even more diverse generation. Thus, millennials are ushering in a very different

America from the one in which today's older generations grew up.

Most white baby boomers, a large share of today's seniors, were born in an era when immigration was at an historic low point and when the immigrants who did arrive in America were mostly white Europeans. Then, the nation's much smaller minority population was composed mostly of black Americans, residing in highly segregated cities, leading to little day-to-day contact between most white and minority families.

The rapid demographic shifts over the past three decades, led by immigrants and other minorities as the white population aged, has created what might be characterized as a “cultural generation gap.” Evident of this gap, many older whites are fearful of what the changing racial and ethnic demography means for the nation's future, possibly their own safety, and that government programs funded by their taxes will benefit members of a younger generation that are not “their” children and grandchildren.

An analysis of Pew Research Center surveys from as early as 2012 is suggestive.<sup>32</sup> More than half of white baby boomers and seniors believed that increasing numbers of newcomers from other countries represented a threat to traditional American values. They were less likely than minorities or younger whites to hold a positive opinion of the growing numbers of Hispanics

and Asians in the United States. A more recent 2016 survey shows that whites over age 50 are decidedly unsupportive of the Black Lives Matter movement, compared with younger generations.<sup>33</sup>

Disparate generational views are also apparent from the data in Table 8, taken from the Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI) 2015 American Values Survey, which included a question on whether America’s culture and way of life since the 1950s has mostly changed for the better or worse. Among all respondents, only the youngest group, millennials, show more than half answering “changed for the better.” In contrast, more than half of those ages 35-54 and 55 and above answered “changed for the worse.”

The fear of the unknown associated with the nation’s changing demographics and what

it implies for immigration policy, affirmative action, and related issues was a subtext of the 2016 presidential election. Understanding these attitudes, Republican candidate Donald Trump ran on a “Make America Great Again” theme, harking back to an earlier time in which older white Americans felt more comfortable. The results of the past three presidential elections were decided along widening age divides—with Democrats winning the increasingly minority young population and Republicans winning those over age 40.<sup>34</sup> As distinct from 2008 and 2012, older whites and Donald Trump won in 2016.

Yet the generational divide is not totally due to racial and ethnic composition. Support for a more diverse America and for politicians who embrace it does not come only from minorities among the millennial generation. It comes from

TABLE 8

### Generational attitude differences about change in America

| Since the 1950s, do you think American culture and way of life has mostly changed for the better, or has it mostly changed for the worse? |                |                |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|
|                                                                                                                                           | For the better | For the worse* |
| <b>All respondents</b>                                                                                                                    |                |                |
| Age 18-34                                                                                                                                 | 55%            | 44%            |
| Age 35-54                                                                                                                                 | 43%            | 56%            |
| Age 55+                                                                                                                                   | 42%            | 56%            |
| <b>White respondents</b>                                                                                                                  |                |                |
| Age 18-34                                                                                                                                 | 51%            | 47%            |
| Age 35-54                                                                                                                                 | 40%            | 59%            |
| Age 55+                                                                                                                                   | 39%            | 60%            |
| <b>Minority respondents</b>                                                                                                               |                |                |
| Age 18-34                                                                                                                                 | 59%            | 41%            |
| Age 35-54                                                                                                                                 | 49%            | 51%            |
| Age 55+                                                                                                                                   | 54%            | 45%            |

\* Respondents who refused to answer or answered “don’t know” are not shown.

Source: Author’s analysis of Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI) 2015 American Values Survey microfile

millennial whites as well. Table 9 shows that white millennials also believe America has changed for the better. In other PRRI survey questions, they are more supportive than older whites in the belief that immigrants strengthen our country and that America's best days are ahead.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, the 2016 Pew survey showed that, in contrast to their elders, 60 percent of white millennials support the Black Lives Matter movement.

**“Support for a more diverse America and for politicians who embrace it does not come only from minorities among the millennial generation. It comes from millennial whites as well.”**

The 2016 presidential election also showed that white support for Donald Trump was not uniformly strong across age groups. White margins for Trump (percent voting for Trump minus percent voting for his opponent Hillary Clinton) were high for white age groups 65 and over (19 percent), 45-64 (28 percent), and 30-44 (7 percent)—but only 4 percent for the 18-29 age group. The very low white millennial support for Trump, coupled with the strong minority millennial support for Clinton, allowed her to win young millennials overall by a margin of 19 percent.<sup>36</sup>

Clearly, there is still a racial-ethnic divide on attitudes and voting patterns within the millennial generation, but it is less severe than among the older generations. Millennials are less wedded to specific political parties than to issues that help to unite them. Moreover, a 2017 Harvard Institute of Politics Youth Poll finds that well over half of all millennials of different ages, parties, and regions of the country want to help to unite, not divide, America.<sup>37</sup>

### **Geography of the cultural generation gap**

Since the millennial generation represents a bridge between an older, largely white America

and a much more diverse post-millennial America, it is informative to look at the current geography of this “cultural generation gap” by a simple measure:

*Percent white among pre-millennials (age 35+) minus percent white among post-millennials (under age 18)*

Because the U.S. over-35 population is 68 percent white, and its under-18 population is 52 percent white, the national cultural generation gap takes a value of 16.

Although the cultural generation gap is forming throughout the nation, it is occurring at different speeds in different regions. The most youthful and racially diverse populations are in the Southeast, Southwest, and urban centers, where immigrant minorities have had an established presence.

Arizona leads all states with a gap of 27. This is because its pre-millennial population is 67 percent white and its post-millennial population is only 40 percent white. Nevada and New Mexico have the next largest gap values at 23.

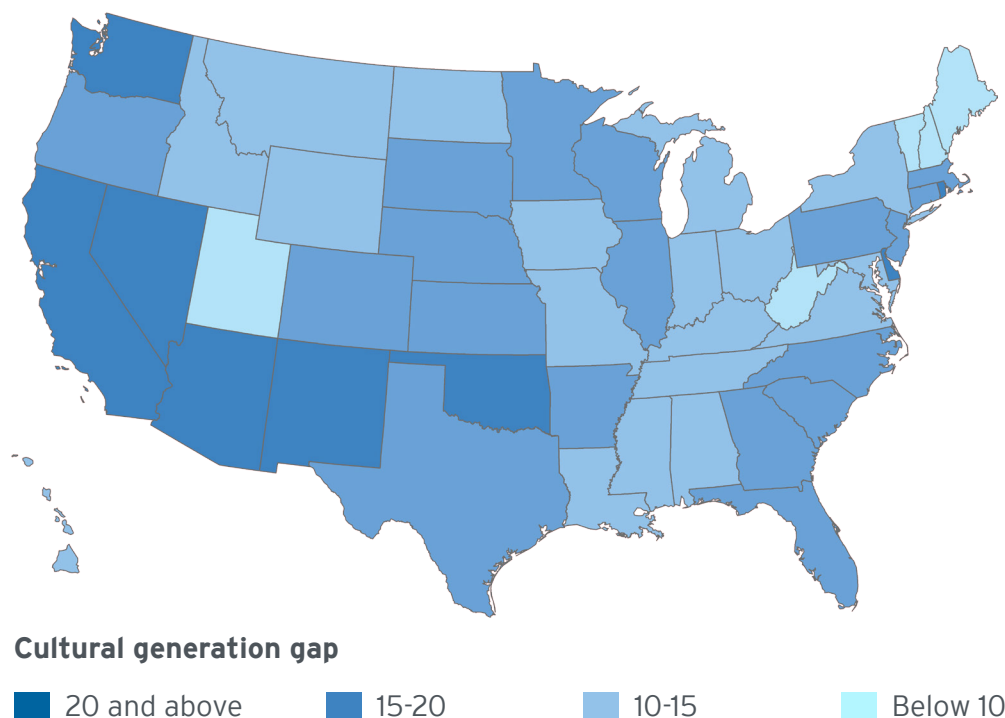
However, not all states with large gaps have “minority white” post-millennial populations. For example, Rhode Island, with a gap of 22, has a post-millennial population that is 60 percent white, while its pre-millennial population is 82 percent white. California has minority white populations among its pre-millennials (46 percent white) and post-millennials (26 percent white) for a sizable gap of 20. Map 5 ranks all states by their cultural generation gaps.

Large metropolitan areas with the greatest cultural generation gaps, as shown in Table 9, tend to be in Southern and Western states including retirement areas (Florida cities Cape Coral, North Port-Sarasota, Lakeland, Tampa, and Deltona-Daytona Beach; plus Tucson, Phoenix, and Albuquerque,). They also comprise of areas at or inland from coastal California (San Diego, Oxnard, Riverside, Fresno, Bakersfield, Stockton, and Las Vegas); and selected Northern areas that



## States classed by cultural generation gaps

Gap = Age 35+ percent white minus under age 18 percent white



Source: Author's analysis of U.S. Census population estimates

have attracted younger minorities (Springfield, New Haven, Allentown, and Milwaukee).

At the other end of the spectrum, areas with the smallest gaps are largely white areas: in New England, the noncoastal North, and selected parts of the West. These areas have yet to experience a great deal of youthful diversity and are holding onto large numbers of baby boomers and seniors. Among states with modest "gap" measures are West Virginia, Vermont, Maine, New Hampshire, Utah, and Kentucky. Metropolitan areas with small gaps include Knoxville, Cincinnati, Pittsburgh, and St. Louis.

It is worth noting that places where the cultural generation gap has generated the most heated debates are those where youthful minority growth has been large. Arizona is a good example, as it

increased its minority population by two-thirds between 2000 and 2015, during which time the state became a flashpoint for harsh immigration measures and enforcement. This was made prominent by the 2010 signing of the Support Our Law Enforcement and Safe Neighborhoods Act, also known as Arizona Senate Bill 1070. Although the Supreme Court struck down key parts of the law and its most severe provisions have since been turned back, it was one of the strictest immigration laws ever enacted by a state—initially subjecting individuals who did not carry citizenship papers to arrest, detention, and possible deportation.<sup>38</sup>

Negative impacts of the cultural generation gap for all minority children have shown up in a study that shows that states with high cultural generation gaps along with diverse child

TABLE 9

**Greatest racial generation gaps among large metropolitan areas**

|                           | Percent white                                 |                                    |                                            | Generation gap:                                        |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Metropolitan area*</b> | <b>Age 35 and above<br/>"Pre-millennials"</b> | <b>Age 18-35<br/>"Millennials"</b> | <b>Under age 18<br/>"Post-millennials"</b> | <b>Pre-millennials<br/>minus post-<br/>millennials</b> |
| Cape Coral, FL            | 78                                            | 56                                 | 48                                         | 30                                                     |
| Tucson                    | 64                                            | 44                                 | 35                                         | 29                                                     |
| North Port-<br>Sarasota   | 85                                            | 66                                 | 58                                         | 27                                                     |
| Phoenix                   | 68                                            | 48                                 | 42                                         | 26                                                     |
| Lakeland, FL              | 70                                            | 53                                 | 46                                         | 24                                                     |
| Oxnard, CA                | 56                                            | 38                                 | 32                                         | 24                                                     |
| Albuquerque               | 50                                            | 33                                 | 26                                         | 24                                                     |
| Springfield, MA           | 78                                            | 63                                 | 55                                         | 23                                                     |
| Milwaukee                 | 76                                            | 61                                 | 53                                         | 23                                                     |
| Las Vegas                 | 54                                            | 37                                 | 31                                         | 23                                                     |
| New Haven                 | 72                                            | 56                                 | 50                                         | 23                                                     |
| Fresno                    | 41                                            | 24                                 | 19                                         | 22                                                     |
| Tampa                     | 73                                            | 56                                 | 50                                         | 22                                                     |
| Bakersfield               | 46                                            | 30                                 | 24                                         | 22                                                     |
| Tulsa                     | 75                                            | 60                                 | 53                                         | 22                                                     |
| Stockton                  | 43                                            | 27                                 | 22                                         | 21                                                     |
| Deltona-Daytona<br>Beach  | 80                                            | 64                                 | 59                                         | 21                                                     |
| Allentown, PA             | 82                                            | 67                                 | 61                                         | 21                                                     |
| Riverside                 | 43                                            | 26                                 | 22                                         | 21                                                     |
| San Diego                 | 54                                            | 41                                 | 33                                         | 21                                                     |
| US                        | 68                                            | 56                                 | 52                                         | 16                                                     |

\* Among 100 largest metropolian areas. Names are abbreviated.

Source: Author's analysis of U.S. Census Bureau population estimates, 2015



populations show less effort in support of public education.<sup>39</sup>

As young new minorities continue to move away from immigrant gateways, the cultural generation gap will emerge in both public and private arenas, creating conflict over issues that are important to young minorities (such as immigration reform, improved public schools, affordable housing) and those that are important to the middle-aged and seniors (lower taxes, medical and retirement benefits). The gap will be widest in states and communities where the growth of young minorities is new and the racial and ethnic profile of the younger generation differs most from pre-millennials. As a bridge generation, millennials will play a key role in negotiating these differences.

### **Projecting millennials' role into the future**

Although the millennials today are young adults, this generation will continue to play a pivotal role as a bridge to a more diverse America even as it advances into middle age. This is made plain by examining Figure 7, which contrasts the projected age structure of the U.S. population in 2015 with those projected for 2025 and 2035.

The profile of the millennial population sticks out in each of these years as it progresses from ages 18-34 in 2015 to ages 28-44 in 2025 and to ages 38-54 in 2035. Just as with the baby boomers, they are larger than their immediately preceding and succeeding generations.

As millennials progress into middle age, they become more of the center of the population. For example, in 2015, over half of the U.S. population was older than millennials, and less than a quarter of Americans were younger. But in 2035, less than a third of Americans (including Generation Xers and baby boomers) will be older than millennials and 46 percent of the population will be their junior. Clearly, by then, millennials will have made their marks as leaders in business, politics, and other realms.

Yet what is especially noteworthy is that they will continue to be the bridge between those older, “whiter” generations and increasingly diverse younger generations. This is because the size of the white population in the post-millennial generation will continue to shrink in the 20 years beyond 2015. At the same time, the combined racial and ethnic minority populations will account for all of the gains in post-millennial populations.

Of course, the pre-millennial populations will remain “whiter” than either the millennial or post-millennial populations as the large, mostly white baby boomer generation populates the older ages. In 2035, the pre-millennial population—then ages 55 and older—will be almost two-thirds white (see Figure 8). Even then at middle age, the millennial population will represent a bridge population to younger generations as racial and ethnic diversity becomes more pervasive among professionals, managers, and influence-makers in America. Then, whites will compose slightly more than half of millennials and less than half of the population under age 38, while Hispanics will constitute about 28 percent of the latter population and blacks, Asians, and other nonwhite groups will make up 26 percent of the young adult and child populations.

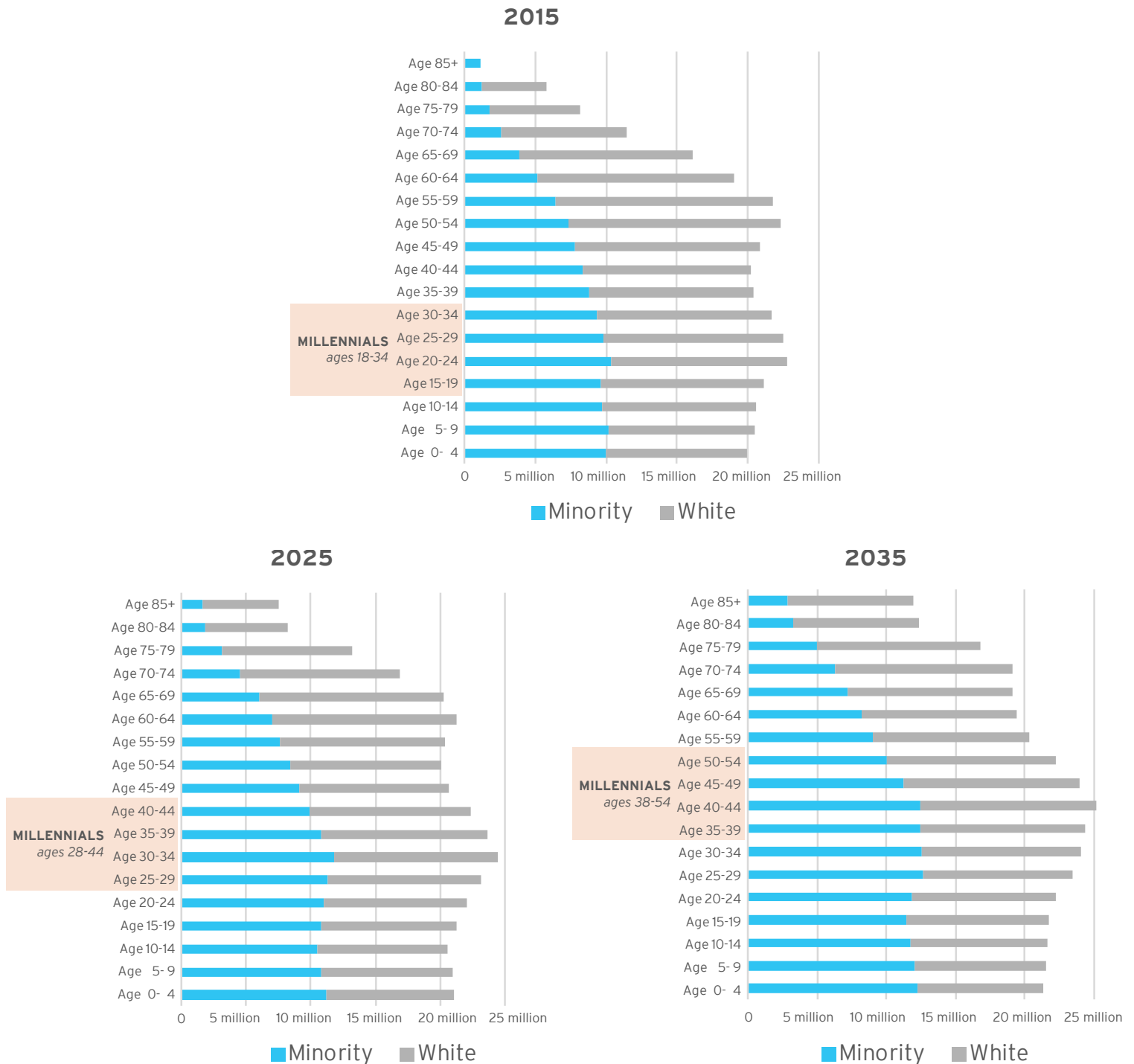
As discussed earlier, these national patterns will play out differently across metropolitan areas. As an illustration, Figure 9 displays the projected 2025 populations for four somewhat distinct areas—Los Angeles, Atlanta, Chicago, and Minneapolis-St. Paul—showing the racial-ethnic makeups of pre-millennials, then 45 and older; millennials, 28 to 44; and post-millennials, younger than 28.

In highly diverse Los Angeles, racial and ethnic minorities dominate the 2025 populations of pre-millennials, millennials, and post-millennials. Yet the Hispanic population share increases from 39 to 58 percent from the oldest to the youngest generation, just as the white share declines from 32 to 19 percent. Los Angeles millennials will advance into young middle age as the first generation that is nearly half-Hispanic—paving

FIGURE 7

## Age and race-ethnic distributions of U.S. population

2015 and projected 2025 and 2035

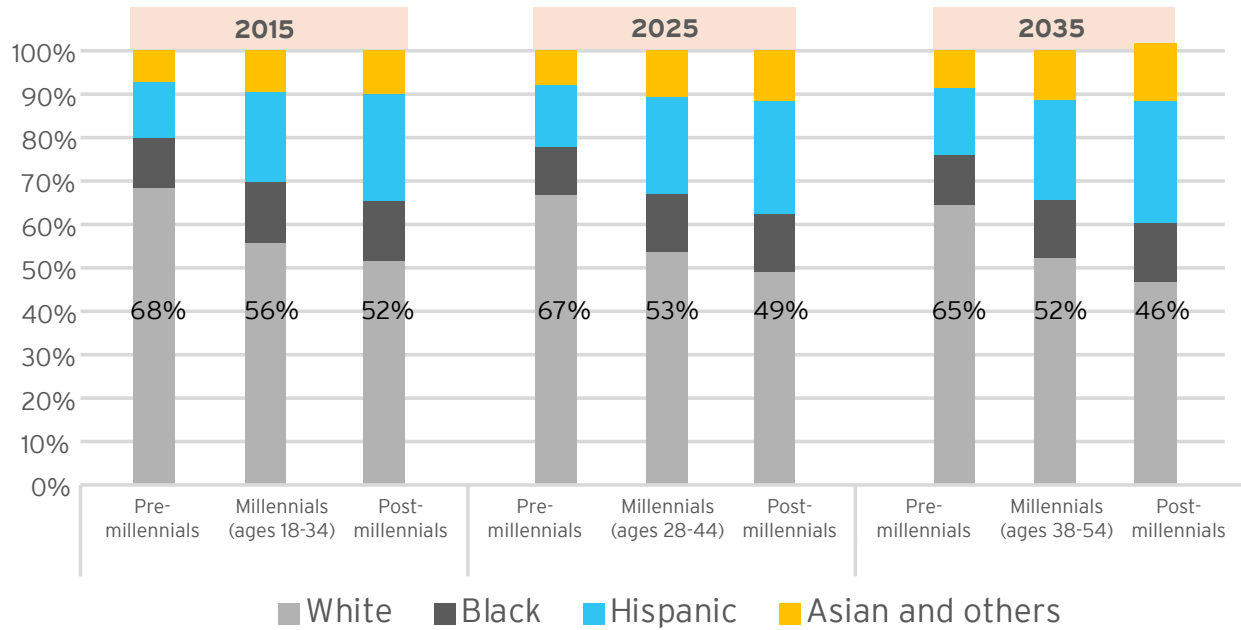


Source: Author's analysis of U.S. Census national population projections

FIGURE 8

### Race-ethnic distributions of pre-millennials, millennials, and post-millennials

U.S. 2015 and projected 2025 and 2035

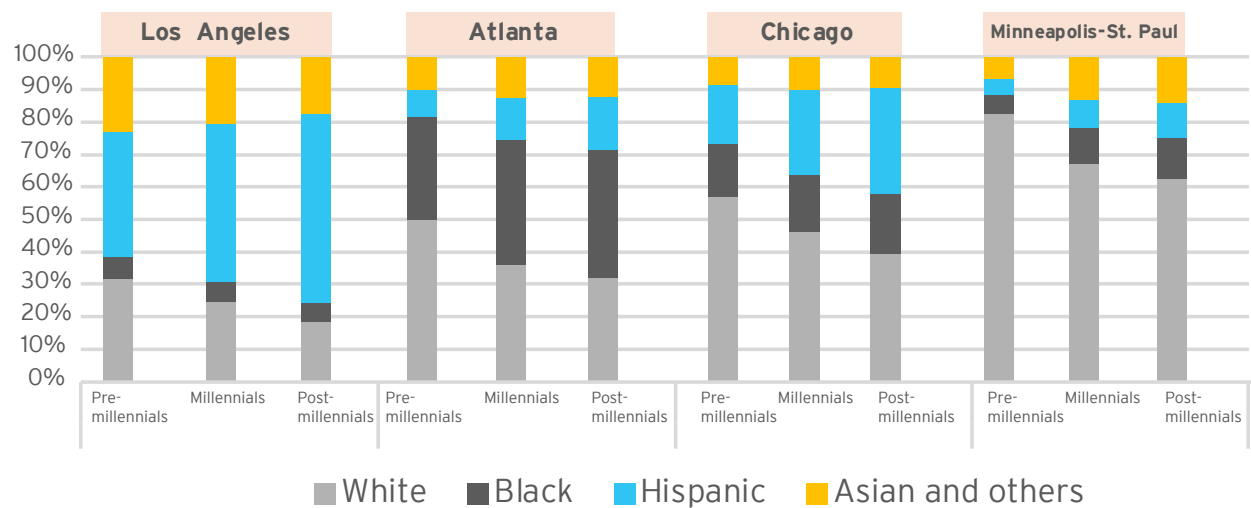


Source: Author's analysis of U.S. Census national population projections

FIGURE 9

### Race-ethnic distributions of pre-millennials, millennials, and post-millennials

Projected to 2025: Los Angeles, Atlanta, Chicago, Minneapolis-St Paul



Source: Author's projections

the way for more Hispanic-dominant generations to follow.

In Atlanta, young middle-age blacks would outnumber whites for the first time in 2025. However, as a bridge to the area's post-millennial population, it also ushers in larger shares of Hispanics, who will compose 16 percent of Atlanta's young adults and youth.

The projected 2025 young middle-age population in metropolitan Chicago would be the first one in which whites were a minority. Chicago's largest racial minority is Hispanics, who expand to comprise one-third of the area's post-millennial

population, compared with blacks, who would make up less than one-fifth.

Minneapolis-St. Paul stands in contrast to the first three areas because of the dominance of whites in each generation. Still, there is sharp distinction between its pre-millennial generation, which is 82 percent white, and the millennial and post-millennial generations at 67 percent and 63 percent white, respectively. As young middle-age adults, Minneapolis-St. Paul's millennials will be ushering in larger shares of blacks, Hispanics, Asians, and other races, which, in 2025, will be even more prevalent among the area's youth.



## Conclusion

Millennials are already making an indelible imprint on the nation as evident from the tremendous publicity they receive and the consumer base they represent. Yet their most lasting legacy is yet to be determined, based on how successfully they serve as a social, economic, and political bridge to the next racially diverse generation.

Racial minorities make up well over two-fifths of the millennial population nationally, and more than half the population in 10 states and in 30 of the largest metropolitan areas. They follow “whiter” pre-millennial generations—Gen Xers, baby boomers, and their seniors. In so doing, they face challenges of integration and acceptance into America’s mainstream and to serve as role models and provide ladders of success for later generations.

They have already made an impressive start, by holding more racially tolerant attitudes than earlier generations and leading the way among young adults in forming interracial marriages. As a generation, they are also the most educated of all those that came before them, which should bode well for future success.

Yet beyond the good-news scenario of millennials is a continued racial socioeconomic divide that puts some millennial groups behind others. Black and Hispanic millennials are faring decidedly worse on measures such as education, homeownership, and income than whites and many Asian millennials—a divide that is particularly wide in several large metropolitan areas. This

is especially concerning given that black and Hispanic families possess fewer resources to draw from to lift up their younger generations. Racial and ethnic poverty disparities are even wider among children than for millennials or the population as a whole.

These racial and ethnic divisions are compounded by the one-two punch that hit millennials and their parents directly, from which many are still recovering: the Great Recession and subsequent housing market crash. These two events affected all millennials. Long-term societal trends toward later marriage, childbearing, and homeownership were accentuated as young people saddled with high student debt, faced with poor job prospects, and frozen out of the mortgage market were stalled in creating home equity and obtaining jobs that would lead to careers. However, these stalled patterns became even bigger impediments to racial and ethnic minorities whose parents took major hits in wealth that were tied to homeownership. This is especially troubling since millennials and post-millennials from these minority groups will make up ever-increasing shares of future student, homebuying, and workforce populations.

Despite this late start and predictions that future generations will earn less than their parents,<sup>41</sup> millennials tend to be optimistic about the future. A majority of them say that they want to get married, have children, and purchase a home.<sup>42</sup> Most members of each major racial and ethnic group are optimistic about their own future; and

Hispanic, Asian, and black millennials are more likely than whites to say both that they personally will do better financially than their parents and that the life of their generation will be better than that of their parents.<sup>43</sup>

There are reasons for optimism as the employment situation is improving, and there are signs that housing affordability is reviving.<sup>44</sup> These patterns may be especially favorable to younger millennials and post-millennials when they enter improving labor and housing markets under circumstances with less competition from their smaller-cohort peers.<sup>45</sup>

As a bridge generation between a whiter, older America and the more multihued country of the future, millennials will play an important role toward achieving their own success and that of subsequent generations. One challenge will be to assist in bridging the “cultural generation gap” that exists in much of today’s politics in which older generations are reluctant to embrace the nation’s younger, diverse generations in terms of

providing much-needed investment and political support for them.<sup>46</sup>

By example and as advocates, millennials of all racial and ethnic backgrounds can make the case that investing in a more inclusive America is essential to the nation’s economic success and will, as well, benefit these older populations. In this regard, the millennials’ population size is important, as it already comprises the largest generation of eligible voters.<sup>47</sup> Beyond that, as they move into middle age, millennials will represent the new face of America in politics, in business, in popular culture, and as the nation’s image to the rest of the world.

Millennials are indeed worthy of attention. They are smart. They are creative. They are passionate about many issues. But the most consequential characteristic embodied by the members of this unique generation, as the country evolves demographically, is their racial and ethnic diversity.

# Appendix A

TABLE 1A

## Race-ethnic composition of millennial population, 100 largest metropolitan areas

| Metropolitan area                     | Percent of population |        |        |          |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------|--------|--------|----------|
|                                       | White#                | Black# | Asian# | Hispanic |
| Akron, OH                             | 77.3                  | 13.7   | 3.8    | 2.5      |
| Albany-Schenectady-Troy, NY           | 75.1                  | 9.7    | 5.7    | 6.8      |
| Albuquerque, NM                       | 32.6                  | 2.6    | 2.4    | 53.5     |
| Allentown-Bethlehem-Easton, PA-NJ     | 67.2                  | 6.3    | 3.5    | 21.0     |
| Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Roswell, GA     | 43.0                  | 36.5   | 6.5    | 11.8     |
| Augusta-Richmond County, GA-SC        | 50.2                  | 37.7   | 2.3    | 7.1      |
| Austin-Round Rock, TX                 | 48.9                  | 7.3    | 6.3    | 35.3     |
| Bakersfield, CA                       | 29.5                  | 6.2    | 4.2    | 57.7     |
| Baltimore-Columbia-Towson, MD         | 53.5                  | 30.8   | 6.2    | 6.8      |
| Baton Rouge, LA                       | 53.4                  | 37.7   | 2.9    | 4.6      |
| Birmingham-Hoover, AL                 | 59.4                  | 32.2   | 1.7    | 5.4      |
| Boise City, ID                        | 76.0                  | 1.3    | 2.7    | 16.9     |
| Boston-Cambridge-Newton, MA-NH        | 66.0                  | 8.5    | 10.1   | 13.3     |
| Bridgeport-Stamford-Norwalk, CT       | 52.9                  | 13.3   | 6.7    | 25.3     |
| Buffalo-Cheektowaga-Niagara Falls, NY | 72.4                  | 13.9   | 4.9    | 6.1      |
| Cape Coral-Fort Myers, FL             | 55.9                  | 11.3   | 1.9    | 29.1     |
| Charleston-North Charleston, SC       | 62.7                  | 26.5   | 2.1    | 6.3      |
| Charlotte-Concord-Gastonia, NC-SC     | 56.8                  | 25.1   | 4.6    | 11.4     |
| Chattanooga, TN-GA                    | 74.7                  | 15.7   | 2.1    | 5.5      |
| Chicago-Naperville-Elgin, IL-IN-WI    | 48.6                  | 17.3   | 7.3    | 25.2     |
| Cincinnati, OH-KY-IN                  | 77.5                  | 13.8   | 3.0    | 3.6      |
| Cleveland-Elyria, OH                  | 64.8                  | 22.5   | 3.2    | 7.2      |
| Colorado Springs, CO                  | 65.7                  | 7.5    | 3.2    | 19.0     |
| Columbia, SC                          | 52.6                  | 35.6   | 2.9    | 6.7      |
| Columbus, OH                          | 71.6                  | 16.3   | 4.9    | 4.6      |
| Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington, TX       | 42.0                  | 16.5   | 7.1    | 32.3     |

| Metropolitan area                         | Percent of population |        |        |          |
|-------------------------------------------|-----------------------|--------|--------|----------|
|                                           | White#                | Black# | Asian# | Hispanic |
| Dayton, OH                                | 73.5                  | 17.5   | 2.8    | 3.4      |
| Deltona-Daytona Beach-Ormond Beach, FL    | 64.1                  | 14.7   | 2.6    | 16.3     |
| Denver-Aurora-Lakewood, CO                | 60.7                  | 5.8    | 4.7    | 25.7     |
| Des Moines-West Des Moines, IA            | 78.3                  | 6.2    | 4.9    | 8.5      |
| Detroit-Warren-Dearborn, MI               | 62.3                  | 25.2   | 4.6    | 5.2      |
| El Paso, TX                               | 13.5                  | 4.1    | 1.5    | 79.6     |
| Fresno, CA                                | 24.1                  | 5.1    | 11.9   | 56.5     |
| Grand Rapids-Wyoming, MI                  | 76.4                  | 7.4    | 3.2    | 10.4     |
| Greensboro-High Point, NC                 | 52.0                  | 31.5   | 4.4    | 9.6      |
| Greenville-Anderson-Mauldin, SC           | 69.7                  | 18.2   | 2.3    | 8.0      |
| Harrisburg-Carlisle, PA                   | 73.0                  | 11.9   | 4.6    | 7.8      |
| Hartford-West Hartford-East Hartford, CT  | 60.2                  | 12.5   | 6.5    | 18.7     |
| Honolulu, HI                              | 25.4                  | 5.4    | 37.9   | 12.8     |
| Houston-The Woodlands-Sugar Land, TX      | 32.1                  | 18.2   | 7.9    | 40.3     |
| Indianapolis-Carmel-Anderson, IN          | 69.8                  | 16.9   | 3.5    | 7.5      |
| Jackson, MS                               | 39.8                  | 54.5   | 1.5    | 3.2      |
| Jacksonville, FL                          | 59.0                  | 23.9   | 4.2    | 10.2     |
| Kansas City, MO-KS                        | 69.1                  | 13.9   | 3.6    | 10.4     |
| Knoxville, TN                             | 84.0                  | 7.0    | 2.2    | 4.6      |
| Lakeland-Winter Haven, FL                 | 53.0                  | 17.4   | 1.9    | 25.7     |
| Las Vegas-Henderson-Paradise, NV          | 37.0                  | 12.2   | 10.5   | 36.0     |
| Little Rock-North Little Rock-Conway, AR  | 63.3                  | 25.9   | 2.2    | 6.3      |
| Los Angeles-Long Beach-Anaheim, CA        | 26.0                  | 6.6    | 15.0   | 49.8     |
| Louisville/Jefferson County, KY-IN        | 73.8                  | 16.0   | 2.5    | 5.4      |
| Madison, WI                               | 78.3                  | 5.0    | 7.7    | 6.4      |
| McAllen-Edinburg-Mission, TX              | 4.2                   | 0.6    | 0.9    | 94.2     |
| Memphis, TN-MS-AR                         | 38.9                  | 51.1   | 2.3    | 6.2      |
| Miami-Fort Lauderdale-West Palm Beach, FL | 25.4                  | 24.4   | 2.8    | 46.0     |
| Milwaukee-Waukesha-West Allis, WI         | 61.0                  | 18.9   | 5.0    | 12.5     |
| Minneapolis-St. Paul-Bloomington, MN-WI   | 70.9                  | 9.5    | 9.4    | 6.8      |



| Metropolitan area                              | Percent of population |        |        |          |
|------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|--------|--------|----------|
|                                                | White#                | Black# | Asian# | Hispanic |
| Nashville-Davidson--Murfreesboro--Franklin, TN | 69.3                  | 17.5   | 3.1    | 7.9      |
| New Haven-Milford, CT                          | 56.0                  | 14.5   | 5.5    | 21.8     |
| New Orleans-Metairie, LA                       | 47.4                  | 37.0   | 3.4    | 10.3     |
| New York-Newark-Jersey City, NY-NJ-PA          | 41.5                  | 16.8   | 12.4   | 27.6     |
| North Port-Sarasota-Bradenton, FL              | 65.9                  | 10.2   | 2.4    | 19.3     |
| Ogden-Clearfield, UT                           | 78.7                  | 1.5    | 2.4    | 14.5     |
| Oklahoma City, OK                              | 60.6                  | 11.6   | 4.0    | 14.7     |
| Omaha-Council Bluffs, NE-IA                    | 73.1                  | 8.6    | 3.7    | 11.7     |
| Orlando-Kissimmee-Sanford, FL                  | 43.7                  | 17.3   | 5.0    | 31.9     |
| Oxnard-Thousand Oaks-Ventura, CA               | 37.9                  | 1.9    | 6.4    | 50.8     |
| Palm Bay-Melbourne-Titusville, FL              | 68.2                  | 12.9   | 2.9    | 12.8     |
| Philadelphia-Camden-Wilmington, PA-NJ-DE-MD    | 57.3                  | 22.3   | 7.0    | 11.3     |
| Phoenix-Mesa-Scottsdale, AZ                    | 47.8                  | 6.0    | 4.5    | 36.6     |
| Pittsburgh, PA                                 | 81.6                  | 10.2   | 3.6    | 2.5      |
| Portland-Vancouver-Hillsboro, OR-WA            | 69.8                  | 3.2    | 7.9    | 14.2     |
| Providence-Warwick, RI-MA                      | 71.0                  | 6.3    | 4.6    | 15.4     |
| Provo-Orem, UT                                 | 82.3                  | 0.7    | 3.2    | 11.0     |
| Raleigh, NC                                    | 58.4                  | 21.4   | 5.9    | 11.9     |
| Richmond, VA                                   | 52.8                  | 32.4   | 4.6    | 7.5      |
| Riverside-San Bernardino-Ontario, CA           | 26.5                  | 7.6    | 6.4    | 56.7     |
| Rochester, NY                                  | 71.4                  | 13.1   | 4.2    | 8.9      |
| Sacramento--Roseville--Arden-Arcade, CA        | 45.9                  | 7.9    | 15.8   | 25.2     |
| Salt Lake City, UT                             | 69.9                  | 1.7    | 6.4    | 19.0     |
| San Antonio-New Braunfels, TX                  | 29.7                  | 7.1    | 2.9    | 58.5     |
| San Diego-Carlsbad, CA                         | 41.5                  | 5.5    | 12.0   | 37.0     |
| San Francisco-Oakland-Hayward, CA              | 35.7                  | 7.6    | 26.7   | 25.5     |
| San Jose-Sunnyvale-Santa Clara, CA             | 27.8                  | 2.7    | 34.6   | 31.4     |
| Scranton--Wilkes-Barre--Hazleton, PA           | 79.9                  | 5.0    | 2.2    | 11.4     |
| Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue, WA                    | 59.9                  | 6.5    | 15.7   | 11.7     |
| Spokane-Spokane Valley, WA                     | 81.2                  | 2.4    | 3.2    | 7.2      |

| Metropolitan area                            | Percent of population |        |        |          |
|----------------------------------------------|-----------------------|--------|--------|----------|
|                                              | White#                | Black# | Asian# | Hispanic |
| Springfield, MA                              | 62.5                  | 7.5    | 4.8    | 23.0     |
| St. Louis, MO-IL                             | 69.9                  | 20.9   | 3.3    | 3.8      |
| Stockton-Lodi, CA                            | 27.2                  | 7.1    | 16.0   | 45.8     |
| Syracuse, NY                                 | 76.9                  | 9.8    | 4.6    | 5.5      |
| Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater, FL          | 56.2                  | 14.8   | 3.9    | 22.7     |
| Toledo, OH                                   | 71.1                  | 16.2   | 2.1    | 7.9      |
| Tucson, AZ                                   | 43.5                  | 4.1    | 4.1    | 42.9     |
| Tulsa, OK                                    | 60.2                  | 9.4    | 3.1    | 11.5     |
| Virginia Beach-Norfolk-Newport News, VA-NC   | 52.1                  | 31.1   | 4.1    | 8.9      |
| Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MD-WV | 44.0                  | 25.0   | 10.4   | 17.5     |
| Wichita, KS                                  | 67.7                  | 8.6    | 4.8    | 14.8     |
| Winston-Salem, NC                            | 62.9                  | 20.6   | 2.3    | 12.2     |
| Worcester, MA-CT                             | 73.0                  | 5.1    | 5.4    | 14.2     |
| Youngstown-Warren-Boardman, OH-PA            | 78.7                  | 13.4   | 1.0    | 4.5      |

# Pertains to non-Hispanic members of racial group

\* Other racial groups are not shown

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Source: Author's analysis of US Census 2015 population estimates

**Note:** These and other metropolitan area and state data for millennials are available for download at [www.brookings.edu/research/millennials](http://www.brookings.edu/research/millennials).

# Endnotes

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## Written Testimony on RANKED CHOICE VOTING

Good Afternoon Chairman Allen and Co sponsors of the RCV bill.

My name is Robert “Bob” King, former ANC Commissioner representing the Fort Lincoln community of Ward 5 for over 32 years. I chair the Ward 5 Democrats Senior COVID-19 Commission under the leadership of Ward 5 Democrats Chair – Gordon Fletcher. Rank choice voting turns checkers into chess and will upended our traditional democracy in favor of a system few understand, and none can explain. According to the April 1st 2020 Census there are 689,545 residents in District of Columbia. Moreover, according to the Office of Aging (17%)(160,000) are seniors over the age of (60).

Seniors are our most vulnerable, reliable, and stable voting population not only in DC, but across the country. If ranked choice voting should pass it will lead to the greatest voter suppression and marginalization of our seniors since the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Of the 160,000 seniors over the age 60 Wards 1 – Ward 6 have 89,855 seniors residing in their homes, nursing homes, group homes, and assisted living. 72,265 reside in the wards (1,2,3,4, and 6) of the councilmembers who have co-sponsored this bill. Mr. chairman, you and your co sponsors have indeed made mockery of our democracy. You have the audacity and the unmitigated gall to chair a committee hearing on RCV in which you and four other democrats are co sponsors of the RCV bill. If by chance the RCV Bill passes the council, you and the four Democratic councilmembers who co-sponsored this bill will go down in history with the likes of Benedict Arnold and George Wallace, but for different reasons.

Benedict Arnold was the major general during the revolutionary war who defected to the British side and was deemed a traitor. George Wallace stated – segregation now, segregation tomorrow, and segregation forever. You and your democratic co-sponsors will go down in history for engaging and engineering a hostile takeover of our Democratic Party and defecting to the Independent Party.

You and your co-sponsors would say to the 160,000 seniors in the District of Columbia ranked choice voting now, ranked choice voting tomorrow, and ranked choice voting forever.

1. 54% of DC senior's live alone. Which is 14% higher than the national rate
2. 295 centenarian (100) years and over living in D.C and they are watching you and your co sponsors

Finally, we request that there is no vote taken in the committee or full council until an Impact Senior Assessment Study is completed.

Thank You

## VOICE AMENDMENT ACT of 2021 Written Testimony

Good morning, Chairman Allen,

For the record, I am Gordon Fletcher currently a three term ANC Commissioner in the North Michigan Park community of Ward (5A08), two term Chair of the Ward 5 Democrats, and a candidate for the Ward 5 DC Council seat.

Ward 5 Democrats voted unanimously to support/accept the recommendation of the Senior COVID-19 Commission chaired by Robert “Bob” King to conduct a senior impact assessment study before any approval of ranked choice voting by the Committee or the full Council. Ward 5 Democrats Senior COVID-19

We request that the Council of the District of Columbia (the Council) authorize and fund an “Impact Assessment Study” to determine what barriers might result from adopting RCV, and what actions and safeguards would be required to ensure that residents of our senior public and private housing, assisted living, nursing homes, and group home facilities receive the education and training needed before a new and complicated voting system is rolled out. Especially those that are **blind**, residents with physical limitations and disabilities, home-bound seniors who are cared for by health professionals (non-family), **visually impaired**, residents using walkers, canes, and wheelchairs, and many who are **functionally illiterate and those with language barriers**. Ward 5 is home to the largest number of senior housing units/apartments in the city by having 17 out of 76 senior housing buildings. For example, Ft. Lincoln has the largest population of seniors and residents with disabilities anywhere in the city with well over 1500 residents.

According to New York reporters Stupp article dated November 2019 - Also where my parents reside in Yonkers, NY and my father is a senior, “Seniors vote in higher proportion than others, however in RCV jurisdictions with greater percentage of older voters, more ballots-marking errors occur. Improperly marked ballots are discarded”.

In conclusion we support the DC Democratic Party’s recommendation to reject ranked choice voting.

Councilmember Charles Allen, Chairperson  
Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety

**B24-0372, The "Voter Ownership, Integrity, Choice and Equity  
Amendment Act of 2021"**

Thursday, Nov. 18, 2021

Testimony of Donald R. Dinan  
D.C. Democratic State Committee  
Male Committee member, Ward 6  
221 9<sup>th</sup> Street, SE  
Washington, DC 20003  
202-997-3453  
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Good afternoon, Chairperson Allen and Committee members. My name is Don Dinan and I am one of the male Ward 6 Committee members. I testify in opposition to the Bill.

1. There is a significant question of whether a change of this magnitude in the election system of the District of Columbia requires a change in the Home Rule Charter and lies outside the jurisdiction of the D.C. City Council. We are aware that there are legal opinions that the City Council has the power to change the voting system, but there are also legal opinions to the contrary, which could invite legal controversy leading to litigation, a result which should be avoided, if at all possible, due to the cost, expense, and risk that the Courts will strike the whole thing down.

Rank Choice Voting (RCV) is often referred to as an instant run-off. When the Home Rule Charter was being written in the early 1970s, enacted by the Congress in 1973, and approved by the voters in a special referendum in 1974, the concept of run-off elections was soundly rejected as a vestige of the Jim Crow Era. Rather, the system of "first past the post"

was adopted, where the candidate who got the most votes won. Adopting RCV violates that founding principle.

2. While there are many theoretical studies which argue that RCV increases the chances of the election of minorities and other disadvantaged groups, and increases diversification, there is little empirical evidence that this is actually the case. Nationwide, in elections which have used RCV, in only 3.87% of cases have the results been changed. Source: *Politico*.

In the most recent RCV election, in New York City's elections of November 2<sup>nd</sup>, only 3 races out of 63 were changed, and one of them was a Republican race. In fact, RCV almost led to changing the results of the Mayoral Election, where the top vote getter, Eric Adams, was almost overtaken by the leading White candidate in the race. In the other two races, in Queens, the RCV race was between two Asians, and in Harlem, between two African Americans, albeit, the female candidate, Kristan Richardson Jordan, overtook the male incumbent. Thus, in only one race was there an arguable diversity change.

3. Furthermore, the District of Columbia does not need such a change. The D.C. City Council, the Office of the Mayor, and of the Attorney General already, and historically, are inclusive and diverse in race, gender, religion, ethnic background, and sexual orientation. Most of the winners in the 2018 and 2020 elections, both primaries and general, received well over 50% of the vote. This proposal to go to RCV in the District of Columbia is literally the proverbial "Solution in search of a problem."

4. In addition, RCV is extremely expensive as all the run-offs and calculations are done, and would lead to a huge, unnecessary cost to the taxpayers. It also leads, as shown in New York, to a certain amount of voter dissatisfaction and frustration, even disillusionment. The voters in the District of Columbia are accustomed to receiving the results of the elections the night of, or, at the latest, the day after the election. Because of the number of calculations that must be done in a close RCV election, as shown in New York, the results are not known until 2 to 3 weeks later. The final results there just came out this week.

5. Perhaps, the "proof is in the pudding." Most jurisdictions that adopted RCV have subsequently discontinued it. Today, only two states (Alaska and Maine) have a handful of cities, most relatively small, which use it.

RCV is not needed in the District of Columbia. We do not have the problems which it is supposedly designed to fix. The voters should not be saddled with the added expense, and as history has shown, it does not actually work.

I thank the Committee very much for this opportunity to testify.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Donald R. Dinan  
Donald R. Dinan

Testimony of the Ward 7 Democrats on  
Bill 24-372, the Voter Ownership, Integrity, Choice, and Equity  
Amendment Act of 2021

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Even if you support the idea of Ranked Choice Voting (RCV), you should oppose this bill.

Good afternoon, Chairperson Allen and members of the Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety,

My name is Karim D. Marshall, I serve as the Second Vice Chair of the Ward 7 Democrats. I am a third generation Washingtonian from Ward 7 and Ward 8, a product of DCPS, and the child of a working-class family. I am here, on behalf of the 64,000 registered Democrats in Ward 7, to testify in opposition to Bill 24-372, the Voter Ownership, Integrity, Choice, and Equity Amendment Act of 2021.

There are several reasons why we believe the Committee should reject the proposed bill; however, I will focus on the disproportionate effect this bill will have on the electoral voice of Black and Brown communities, especially those East of the River.

Most votes wins.

One person one vote.

These rules are simple and easy to understand. These rules have consistently produced one of the most progressive legislative bodies in the country. These rules work.

But RCV supporters seek to overturn these rules with a system that is acknowledged by researchers who examined the Bay Area RCV system to “exacerbate turnout disparities between groups who are likely to vote and those who are not - including [younger voters, voters with less formal education, and] minority voters.” Despite the acknowledgement of this problem by the New York Board of Elections in their 2018 staff report, they went forward with RCV without any identified solution to minimize this harm. I urge you to read the 2018 New York Charter Commission Report discussing Ranked Choice Voting and the studies referenced therein.

In line with the undervoting and exhaustion problems, RCV supporters will often say “You don’t have to rank your vote if you don’t want to.” This argument reflects a deep misunderstanding of voting behaviors in the District of Columbia, particularly those of voters of color and voters east of the river. Undervoting occurs at a much higher rate in Wards 7 and 8 than in the rest of the District. Every two years, our residents have less of a voice in the selection of the second At-Large Council seat because of undervoting. RCV would make this situation worse by baking in ballot exhaustion. In a crowded field, if a tally goes to a second, third, fourth, or fifth round and the undervoting trend continues, Black voters, voters of color, and voters East of the River will be further marginalized. They will be out of the game in the first round of voting.

I don't want to be reductive, but other solutions exist and should be studied as well. We could use actual runoff elections in either the primary or general elections, we could make election day a Holiday, or increase the accessibility of voting. Allow the Board of Elections to study and present potential solutions based on empirical research reflecting local behaviors.

But a cold bill is not the way to reform our electoral system. Even long-time supporters of RCV have expressed disappointment with the approach taken with this bill. There has been no study of how this would be implemented in the District. There has been no effective grassroots effort, and most damningly, there has been no front-end effort to increase voter participation in low participation areas. Because we are the Nation's Capital, advocates too often seek to use us as a laboratory for policies in the hope that they will get national attention. Policies from other jurisdictions are carbon copied into the District without sufficient thought on how to best adapt potential solutions that will fit the unique position of the District. We deserve better.

New York spent more than a decade studying and designing their RCV system with its acknowledged problems. It was implemented after a ballot measure, not a Council Bill. A change of this magnitude to something as fundamental as how we elect our representatives should not be implemented by Council decree before any meaningful study on local implementation.

The Council has a clear choice before it: change election rules to potentially get a different result OR require BOEE to study and recommend substantive measures that will make voting more accessible, increase voter turnout, and engage more of the electorate in the selection of their representatives. The second choice is more honest. It may also change results, but it will doubtless increase the sense of ownership that the underrepresented have in their government and isn't that more important than who wins?

The root challenge is not the margin of victory, but the number of residents who vote by not participating. Challenges of voter turnout are clear issues of equity. Wards 7 and Ward 8 voter turnout is directly attributable to the perceived degree of ownership that residents have in their government. Adding complexity and gamification to the voting process does not solve the underlying problem of a population that doesn't believe the government understands their struggles or has their best interest at heart.

At a Special Meeting on September 9, 2021, the DC Democratic Party, with a three-fourths supermajority, passed a resolution urging members of the DC Council to reject Bill 24-372. The Ward 7 Democrats fully support that decision and suggest that instead the Executive and Legislative branches jointly work with civic leaders, voter education non-profits, and voter engagement organizations to develop election reforms that will best serve all residents in the District of Columbia, but particularly the disengaged.

Thank you for your time, I am including with my testimony a copy of the resolution passed by the Ward 7 Democrats in opposition to Bill 24-372, the Voter Ownership, Integrity, Choice, and Equity Amendment Act of 2021 and I will remain available for any questions.



Ward 7 Democrats Resolution in Opposition to Bill 24-372, the Voter Ownership, Integrity,  
Choice, and Equity Amendment Act of 2021

**WHEREAS**, on July 14, 2021, Councilmember Christina Henderson (I), introduced Bill 24-372, the Voter Ownership, Integrity, Choice, and Equity Amendment Act of 2021

**WHEREAS**, the Bill as introduced would mandate ranked choice voting in the District of Columbia for the 2024 elections, and would purportedly include a public education campaign about the transition.

**WHEREAS**, on May 22, 2021, the Ward 7 Dems opened their monthly general membership meeting to speakers who briefly discussed the potential positive and negative aspects of potentially implementing Ranked Choice Voting.

**WHEREAS**, at a Special Meeting on September 9, 2021, the DC Democratic Party, with a three-fourths supermajority passed a resolution urging members of the DC Council to reject Bill 24-372.

**WHEREAS**, the District of Columbia has experienced aggressive and deliberate gentrification in the last 20 years that has systematically marginalized the economic and electoral voice of the African-American, Asian, immigrant, and Latin communities.

**WHEREAS**, Communities of Color in Ward 7 have low confidence in the existing electoral system.

**WHEREAS**, increasing the complexity of the voting system, which already suffers from low engagement, is likely to decrease participation by marginalized voters.

**WHEREAS**, Ranked Choice Voting has been advanced over proven and familiar methods such as runoff elections, open primaries, or an Election Day as a Holiday without any significant study of the unique challenges faced by voters in the District of Columbia.

**RESOLVED**, The Ward 7 Democrats fully support the DC Democratic Party's resolution to urge the Council to vote to reject Bill 24-372 and work with civic leaders, voter education and engagement organizations to develop election reforms that will best serve all residents in the District of Columbia.

**RESOLVED**, The Ward 7 Democrats urge the Executive and Legislative Branches to partner to conduct a robust study to 1) ascertain the current strengths and weakness of our existing electoral system, 2) identify best practices to strengthen and improve ballot access and the District of Columbia's electoral system and calendar, and 3) identify proven (or at least promising) methods which will increase voter participation, particularly for marginalized populations in the District of Columbia.

**Written Testimony of  
Troy Donte' Prestwood, President, Ward 8 Democrats  
Before the Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety  
November 18, 2021**

Good Afternoon Chairman Allen and members of the Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety. I'm Troy Donte' Prestwood, President of the Ward 8 Democrats. I am a former Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner and chairman of ANC 8A. I am also a fourth-generation Washingtonian. I come from a family that was once denied the right to vote, given the right to vote, and of course, allowed to exercise a limited right to vote right here in my hometown.

After extensive debate, on November 20, 2021, the general body of the Ward 8 Democrats voted to reject the implementation of ranked-choice voting in the District. This comes after the DC Democratic Party voted similarly back in September 2021. The Ward 8 Democrats came to this decision after a robust, fair, and thorough dialogue on ranked-choice voting with the Ward 8 community and thought leaders in the District and beyond. We held a spirited discussion on this issue back in July 2021. I invite you and others to go to [Ward8Dems.com](http://Ward8Dems.com) to watch it again.

As you can imagine, there were proponents and opponents of ranked-choice voting present during our July 2021 meeting where we found key concerns centered around voter education. As you know, Ward 8 experiences the lowest voter turnout in the District. Most of this is due to systemic poverty, the transient nature of some of our residents, and persistent challenges around literacy. Attendees shared concerns that ranked-choice voting would leave this population behind. There were also worries about how ranked-choice voting would impact our seniors and disabled individuals.

While provisions in the VOICE Act speak to voter education and outreach around ranked-choice voting, the question many posed to us was why hasn't the District done more to help the Ward increase voter turnout under the current voting regime? For example, Wards 8, 2 and, 7 have significant under-voting on the At-large Council ballot. This has been the case for at least a generation. So why hasn't the District already invested in additional voter resources versus using the VOICE Act as a vehicle to invest at a distant date in the future?

Other concerns were around diluting political power related to the vote of minorities, precisely Black and Latino voters. The research on whether this happens in ranked-choice voting is mixed, but these concerns were raised nevertheless. And it's an important question that must be answered before bringing ranked-choice voting to the District.

Some expressed additional concerns around the lack of federally-certified election machines to tabulate ranked-choice voting. With all the debates about election security, the District must consider this issue before supporting this legislation.

We often hear supporters point to the ranked-choice voting system in New York City as an example on how ranked-choice voting would work in the District. This is a cautionary tale; just because something works well elsewhere doesn't mean it will work well here. We must be careful when others say, "let's bring a new thing to the District." Moreover, supporters of the ranked-choice voting system in New York often leave out that the people passed it through a voter referendum

using the same voting system we currently use here. It did not come from their Council or legislature, which is what's being proposed in the VOICE Act.

We want to challenge each of the Councilmembers who support the VOICE Act to think the bill through more thoroughly, specifically around who it will impact or leave behind. We also ask that more be done today to invest in our voters and keeping them engaged rather than a top-down approach to overhaul our entire election system.

Thank you.

THE DC DEMOCRATIC BLACK CAUCUS



VOICE AMENDMENT ACT OF 2021

TESTIMONY OF TONY DUGGER, PRESIDENT

DC DEMOCRATIC BLACK CAUCUS

NOVEMBER 18, 2021

GOOD AFTERNOON CHAIRMAN CHARLES ALLEN AND MEMBERS OF THE JUDICIARY AND PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE. MY NAME IS TONY DUGGER, AND I AM THE CHAIR OF THE DC DEMOCRATIC BLACK CAUCUS OF THE DC DEMOCRATIC STATE COMMITTEE OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA. I AM TESTIFYING TODAY AS A MEMBER OF THE DEMOCRATIC STATE COMMITTEE AND AS THE CHAIR OF THE DC. DEMOCRATIC BLACK CAUCUS AND MOST IMPORTANTLY AS A PRIVATE CITIZEN OF WARD 7.

ON SEPTEMBER 9, 2021, THE DEMOCRATIC BLACK CAUCUS JOINED THE DC DEMOCRATIC STATE COMMITTEE IN AN OVERWHELMING VOTE TO REJECT THE VOICE AMENDMENT ACT OF 2021. AS WE KNOW THIS AMENDMENT PROPOSES TO REPLACE DC'S VOTING SYSTEM.

CURRENTLY IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, ANY CANDIDATE EARNING THE MOST VOTES DURING AN ELECTION WINS. IN RACES WHERE THERE IS TWO OR MORE CANDIDATES, THE TOP VOTE GETTERS WIN. THIS HAS BEEN THE VOTING SYSTEM OF DC SINCE HOME RULE OF 1974.

UNDER RANK CHOICE VOTING, A CANDIDATE WILL HAVE TO EARN 51% OF THE VOTES CASTED TO WIN.

IF 51% IS NOT EARNED DURING THE FIRST ROUND OF COUNTING, THE LOWEST PERFORMERS ARE OMITTED, AND THEIR VOTES ARE TRANSFERRED TO THE REMAINING CANDIDATES UNTIL ONE EARNS 51%.

SUPPORTERS OF RANK CHOICE VOTING SAY THIS PROMOTES INCLUSION, DIVERSITY, AND EQUITY AND IS THEREBY BEST FOR MINORITY COMMUNITIES. THEY BELIEVE THIS WILL HOLD TRUE FOR RESIDENTS OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA AS IT HAS BEEN IN STATES LIKE UTAH, PORTLAND, MAINE, SAN FRANCISCO, AND SAN LEANDRO, CALIFORNIA.

WHAT RANK CHOICE VOTING SUPPORTERS HAVE FAILED TO RECOGNIZE IS THAT THESE JURISDICTIONS ARE DIFFERENT FROM THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA.

IN MOST AREAS WHERE RANK CHOICE VOTING IS USED, THE BLACK POPULATION IS LESS THAN 11%, THE LATINX POPULATION AND THE ELECTED MINORITIES OF THOSE AREAS ARE PROPORTIONATELY LESS THAN THAT.

FOR EXAMPLE, IN NEW YORK CITY, VOTERS ELECTED ONE ETHNIC AND GENDER BASED GROUP FOR MAYOR OVER THE LAST 100 YEARS EXCEPT IN 1990 WHEN MAYOR DAVID DINKINS, FIRST AFRICAN AMERICAN, WON THE RACE.

RANK CHOICE VOTING IS, THEREFORE, USED TO CHANGE CONDITIONS WHERE DIVERSITY IS NONEXISTENCE AND WHERE THE COLLECTIVE PARTICIPATION OF MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES IS MINIMAL.

THIS IS NOT THE CASE IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA. SINCE THE PASSAGE OF HOME RULE, THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA HAS ELECTED AND APPOINTED ADVOCATES FOR EVERY COMMUNITY AND GROUP OF PEOPLE IN THE CITY. MORE SPECIFICALLY, OUR ELECTED LEADERS TO COUNCIL HAVE BEEN BLACK, WHITE,

MEN AND WOMEN, LGBTQ, AND ADVOCATES FOR ALL DISTRICT RESIDENTS.

TODAY WE HAVE THE LARGEST NUMBER OF WOMEN LEADERS ON THE COUNCIL THAN AT ANY OTHER TIME IN THE HISTORY OF THE CITY, AND WE HAVE ELECTED TWO OUTSTANDING WOMEN MAYORS. OUR CURRENT MAYOR HAS BEEN ELECTED TO AN HISTORIC TWO CONSECUTIVE TERMS, AND WE COULD MAKE HISTORY (IF IT IS THE WILL OF THE PEOPLE) TO ELECT A WOMAN TO A THIRD CONSECUTIVE TERM. THESE OTHER JURISDICTIONS DO NOT HAVE SIMILAR RECORDS OF INCLUSION, DIVERSITY, AND EQUITY.

THERE ARE FOUR OTHER FUNDAMENTAL POINTS WHY RANK CHOICE VOTING WON'T WORK IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA:

1. **IT WILL NOT RESOLVE LOW VOTER TURNOUT:** THERE IS NO RELIABLE DATA THAT SUPPORTS THIS FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA. NATIONAL RESEARCH SHOWS THAT THERE ARE MANY REASONS FOR LOW VOTER TURNOUT, AND THOSE REASONS ARE SPECIFIC TO LOCAL JURISDICTIONS. WE NEED TO IDENTIFY WHAT CREATES A LOW VOTER TURNOUT IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA.
2. **IT WILL NOT RESOLVE THE ISSUE OF THE UNDERVOTE:** RCV WILL CREATE THE OPPOSITE EFFECT AND INCREASE THE UNDER VOTE IN WARDS 7 AND 8.
3. **CONCERNS ABOUT HOW VOTES WILL BE TALLIED:** THE VOICE AMENDMENT ACT OF 2021 USES A VERY COMPLEX AND UNRELIABLE METHOD FOR TALLYING FOR THE VOTES AND THIS HAS BEEN

A SERIOUS CONCERN FOR THE CAUCUS AND STATE COMMITTEE.

4. **NO GREATER LEADERSHIP DIVERSITY:** RCV WILL NOT WILL CREATE GREATER DIVERSITY ON THE DC CITY COUNCIL OR IN THE MAYORAL SELECTION THAN WHAT ALREADY EXISTS. AND THERE IS NO EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT THAT IT WILL.

FINALLY, THERE IS ONE FACT THE COUNCIL MUST REMBER ABOUT RCV AND THE VOTING PATTERNS OF THE DISTRICT OF THE COLUMBIA.

THE AFRICAN AMERICAN "BLACK" COMMUNITY VOTES IN SINGLE DIGITS WHILE OTHER COMMUNITIES IN THE DISTRICT VOTE IN DOUBLE DIGITS.

MATHEMATICALLY, RCV WILL CREATE AN UNDUE ADVANTAGE FOR COMMUNITIES THAT VOTE IN LARGER NUMBERS AND MORE OFTEN.

IN CLOSING, WE WOULD SAY THAT OUR CURRENT SYSTEM CAN BE IMPROVED BUT IT CERTAINLY SHOULD NOT BE REPLACED.





Jaqueline Castaneda  
Judiciary Committee

Public Hearing on B24-0372, Voter Ownership Integrity Choice and Equity Act of 2021  
November 18, 2021

Good Afternoon. My name is Jaqueline Castaneda, a native Washingtonian and longtime Ward 1 resident. I am here today representing the DC Latino Caucus to testify in favor of the VOICE Act. I am honored to speak in front of the Council and among other D.C. leaders passionate about doing what is best for our beloved city. The D.C. Latino Caucus believes the VOICE Act and Rank Choice Voting in D.C. will increase and strengthen opportunities for fairer representation. This is especially important for the Latino community which, despite being a presence in the District for nearly a century, has never been represented on the Council or the Mayor's office.

Fair and equitable representation justifies having an alternative voting system that shifts us towards a more inclusive democracy in our city. The work of the Latino Caucus is meaningful because engagement among D.C. Latinos is not easy. The lack of representation, and inconsistent outreach efforts to the community has added to the challenge.

The Latino population in D.C. is growing. Currently, the D.C. Latino population is approximately 79,000, and of those 37,000 are eligible voters. The number of eligible voters has increased by 10,000 since 2014! We expect to see newer, younger Latino voters as well. A 2020 study titled *Young Latino: A Generation of Change* found that more young Latinos engage in politics at a higher rate than their parents. They are more likely to be engaged and vocal about policies affecting them and their communities.

However, none of this truly means anything if we do not implement a more equitable voting system. Not doing so, we fail to uplift our communities. We will fail to encourage consistent engagement and rapport between our community and D.C. leaders. Ultimately, we will fail to inspire and develop future diverse leaders that can contribute to the advancement of our city.

Therefore, Rank Choice Voting matters to us, and the VOICE Act matters to us. The D.C. Latino Caucus strongly supports bringing Rank Choice Voting in the District because of the opportunities it will create to empower a community we all claim to serve. Latinos have lacked representation for far too long.

Passing the VOICE Act and introducing Rank Choice Voting will allow voters to select candidates who better represent our diversity, will fight for us, empower us, and keep in mind our best interests. We can level the playing field so that minority candidates have room on the stage to bring their communities' concerns to the broader D.C. body of voters (FairVote.org, 2021; Goral, 2021; RepresentWomen, 2020).

We believe that the positive effects of Rank Choice Voting will be seen across the city. Rank Choice Voting will give voice to underrepresented groups. We want them to feel that their vote is powerful, and that they should not worry about holding their nose for that one "good choice" instead of voting for who they truly believe in. Rank Choice Voting will motivate all communities to elect the people they want and push to seat someone who genuinely receives the majority of the votes. And as strong advocates of the VOICE Act, we are ready to support our communities to learn and become experts of Rank Choice Voting.

and will be doing so by committing to helping create inclusive and multi-lingual educational campaigns about Rank Choice Voting.

In conclusion, by passing the VOICE Act, you support uplifting the Latino community and other underrepresented communities. They will vote and run for office in greater numbers, breaking down barriers. By passing the VOICE Act and implementing Rank Choice Voting in D.C., Councilmembers, you will empower D.C.'s newest residents and native sons and daughters, to exercise the power of choice. By passing the VOICE Act and saying yes to Rank Choice Voting, you will restore hope and faith for a fairer democratic process back to the real experts of our city, the people of D.C., will. Thank you.



## **RESOLUTION TO JOIN RANK THE VOTE DC COALITION TO IMPLEMENT RANKED CHOICE VOTING**

- WHEREAS The District of Columbia Latino Caucus is the leading voice for channeling Latino participation in civic engagement and political activity in the DC area; and
- WHEREAS Through its Political Action Committee, the DC Latino Caucus promotes Latino involvement in the political process by endorsing, supporting, and campaigning for local Democratic candidates seeking office; and
- WHEREAS One of the top goals of the DC Latino Caucus is to support the election of the District of Columbia's first Latino Councilmember as well as support the election of other Latinos across the District; and
- WHEREAS As a result of its political activity, the DC Latino Caucus has a deeply vested interest in the manner in which elections are conducted in the District of Columbia; and
- WHEREAS Numerous American jurisdictions have implemented Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) in some form including: The U.S. State of Maine; San Francisco, CA; New York, NY; Oakland, CA; Berkeley, CA; Cambridge, MA; Minneapolis-St. Paul, MN; Portland, ME; and Takoma Park, MD, among others; and
- WHEREAS In 2020 the Democratic Party adopted RCV for its presidential primaries in Alaska, Hawaii, Kansas, and Wyoming, as well as for early voting in the Nevada Caucus; and
- WHEREAS District of Columbia Councilmember Christina Henderson has expressed her intention to soon introduce legislation to adopt RCV in DC elections; and
- WHEREAS A coalition of organizations across the District of Columbia, led by Rank The Vote DC, has emerged to advocate for the adoption of RCV; and
- WHEREAS There are numerous benefits to RCV including: relieving voters from feeling compelled to vote solely for the most "electable" candidate; alleviating concerns over "splitting the vote" for a community seeking to increase its representation from among multiple candidates; preventing candidates from winning by earning a miniscule minority percentage of the total vote; and forcing candidates to appeal more widely for support so as to earn a place among voters' ranked choices; and
- WHEREAS Research suggests that RCV results in women, people of color, and women of color holding office at a higher rate and winning office more often, a result that would be congruent with the goals of the DC Latino Caucus; and

WHEREAS Involvement of the DC Latino Caucus in the Rank The Vote DC coalition provides the opportunity to advocate for implementation of RCV in a manner that will best meet the needs of the Latino community, including the need for multi-lingual voter education to inform the community about the changes represented by RCV; and

WHEREAS The DC Latino Caucus Board had previously voted by email to join the Rank The Vote DC coalition but that vote was not based upon a formal resolution, additional questions have been raised about whether the Caucus should join the coalition, and Board members have expressed the desire to further debate the issue;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED THAT:

The DC Latino Caucus affirms its commitment to join and participate in the Rank The Vote DC coalition to advocate for the implementation of RCV in the District of Columbia.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT:

The DC Latino Caucus conditions its participation in the Rank The Vote DC coalition on the fact that the coalition will advocate for fully funded multi-lingual voter outreach and education to ensure Latino voters are fully informed about changes to the manner in which elections are conducted.

Adopted by the DC Latino Caucus Board at its regularly scheduled monthly Board meeting on February 16, 2021, by a vote of 9 to 0 (a quorum being 6).



Gabriela Mossi  
President

*Respectfully submitted by Jose Barrios, Vice President and Counsel*

Council of the District of Columbia  
Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety  
B24-0372, the “Voter Ownership, Integrity, Choice, and Equity  
Amendment Act of 2021”  
Hearing, November 18, 2021  
Submitted by Celeste Garcia, DC Federation of Democratic Women Representative to the  
DC Democratic State Committee

My name is Celeste Garcia, I am one of the DC Federation of Democratic Women’s representatives to the DC Democratic State Committee. I am a resident of Ward 4.

I come to reaffirm the DC Democratic State Committee and the DC Federation of Democratic Women’s opposition to the VOICE Amendment and ranked-choice voting.

**What is the real problem that we are trying to address?** The current process of one person one vote has worked for the District of Columbia. The party’s research has shown that communities in which minorities are under-represented have benefited from RCV. That is not the situation in the District. Over the years, our City Council has reflected diversity in race, gender, party affiliation, and sexual orientation. We need to identify any concerns with the existing voting process and identify solutions before switching to a more complex system that might not address the real problem and will require extensive voter education and an investment in new equipment.

**Are the majority of District residents educated about the RCV process?** To our knowledge, there has been limited community education about RCV so many of your constituents are not aware of the proposed change, the complexity of the process, and its implications. We think extensive voter education is required before a decision is made.

**How would a move to RCV impact the District of Columbia?** To our knowledge, no research has been published or conducted to study the impact of RCV on election outcomes in the District. Is RCV the right solution to any real problems with the current process in which the candidate with the majority of votes wins? We think further study is required.

Furthermore, the DC Federation of Democratic Women has three primary concerns with the VOICE Amendment of 2021:

- The elimination process with ranked-choice voting is faulty – Once the ranked choices for candidates indicated on a voter's ballot have been eliminated, that ballot is deemed an exhausted ballot. The vote no longer counts.
- The District would need to invest in new election equipment.
- The complexity of the process may discourage rather than encourage participation in the electoral process among seniors (a very reliable voting block) and those who do not vote on a regular basis.

Additionally, the Democratic Party, both locally and nationally, supports the current voting system in which the candidate with the largest number of votes wins. One voter, one vote. We are concerned

about under voting which is already a challenge to representation in DC. Currently, less than half of DC voters make two selections in the At-Large Council races. Historically, under voting has been highest in Wards 7 and 8. RCV could lead to increased disparities. Finally, affluent wards/neighborhoods have consistently higher voter turnout. RCV could potentially tilt electoral influence to these wards.

Finally, given the efforts around the nation to limit the democratic process, RCV could be another means to disenfranchise voters across the District of Columbia.

On behalf of the DCDSC and the DC Federation of Democratic Women, I urge you *not* to move the VOICE Amendment Act of 2021 out of committee.



1324 Kenyon St, NW, Washington, DC 20010

### DC Women in Politics Ranked Choice Voting Position Paper

DCWIP reviewed the current proposed DC Legislation for Ranked Choice Voting (RCV). RCV in multi winner districts is also known as the "single transferable vote". In this process, the ballot shall allow voters to rank candidates for each office in order of preference equal to the total number of candidates for each office; provided that if the voting system, vote tabulation or similar related equipment used by the District cannot feasibly accommodate choices equal to the number of candidates running for office, then the Board of Elections may limit the number of choices a voter may rank to no fewer than three (3).

DCWIP has concluded that the organization will not support the legislation for DC for the following reasons:

- (1) Empirical studies have not been completed to determine the potential disparate impact on minority, women, and senior voters;
- (2) Literature reviewed suggests that the RCV is overly complicated and confusing, depriving voters of genuinely informed choices;
- (3) RCV began in the early 2000's and current data does not show it improves the equality of representation for women and minorities;
- (4) Although proponents of RCV state RCV discourages negative campaigning, there is no evidence that has been shown that RCV actually accomplishes this; and
- (5) There is also no proof to support the claim that RCV is the gold standard for effectively ending gerrymandering.

DCWIP reviewed the following literature discussing Ranked Choice Voting:

- Pew Research survey found that 34% of Republican voters and 32.5% of Democrats couldn't even name their own party's nominee for Congress; now voters are expected

to have five informed choices, in order of preference? FairVote, which supports ranked-choice, found that under RCV, the "...prevalence of ranking three candidates was lowest among African-Americans, Hispanics, voters with less education and those whose first language was not English."<sup>1</sup>

- Per the New York Daily New OptEd, "Seniors vote in higher proportions than others. However, in RCV jurisdictions with greater percentages of older voters, more ballot-marking errors occur. Improperly marked ballots are discarded likely to disproportionately disenfranchise senior voters."<sup>2</sup>
- In October 2019, Gov. Gavin Newsom vetoed a bill that would have allowed more California cities, counties and school districts to adopt RCV. "I am concerned that it has often led to voter confusion," he said, "and that the promise that ranked-choice voting leads to greater democracy is not necessarily fulfilled."<sup>3</sup>
- Gov. Jerry Brown vetoed the RCV bill, stating that "Ranked-choice voting is overly complicated and confusing. I believe it deprives voters of genuinely informed choice."<sup>4</sup>
- As discussed by the Alaskan Policy Forum, "*The inherent feature of ranked-choice voting is problematic because it demands that voters have a large amount of information about candidates' differing views. The fact is that most Alaska voters, like most voters in any election, do not follow political races closely enough to meaningfully rank multiple candidates. Yet in order to avoid losing influence in a ranked-choice voting election, a voter must rank each and every candidate. A voter, even one without strong feelings for or against certain candidates, may feel pressured to rank them anyway based on little more than random chance. It is impossible to know exactly how many voters in ranked-choice elections feel this way since nothing can be inferred from how they filled out their ballots, but this phenomenon is likely common.*"<sup>5</sup>
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Based on both the analytical data and empirical assessments reviewed and vetted by the Executive Committee of DC Women in Politics, we have determined that Rank Choice

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Not only does our examination show that RCV may not benefit women and people of color in the electoral process, we also buttress our decision based on the most recent Census data (2017) available to us which shows that between 2000 and 2010, there has been a 31% jump in the non-Hispanic white population in DC while the black population of the city dropped by 11.5%. Those statically are likely even more disparate in 2021.

That data also reflected that 1 in 7 Washingtonians are immigrants with a large number of them NOT fluent in English. The combination of the challenges of dealing with those who are not fluent in English, as well as seniors who would have difficulty navigating the RCV process, this proposed legislation, whether intentional or not, would likely serve to disenfranchise a significant population of DC voters and thus harm electoral aspirations for both women and people of color.

Again, DC Women in Politics must go on record as opposing this proposed legislation and any efforts to adopt Rank Choice Voting as an electoral vehicle in the District of Columbia.

To register your vote in support of not adopting Ranked Choice in DC contact DC Women in Politics.org @ [DC Women in Politics](#)

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## Council Testimony of Alice Walker on Rank Choice Voting (RCV)

### The Voter Ownership, Integrity, Choice, & Equity (VOICE) Amendment Act of 2021

Thursday, November 18, 2021

My name is Alice Walker, and I am one of the Representatives of DC Federation of Democratic Women (referred to as the Federation) to the DC Democratic State Committee (DCDSC). I am reinforcing the positions of those expressed today by members of the DC Democratic State Committee and those of the DC Federation of Democratic Women which were earlier expressed during our Women in Blue Council Lobby Day, May 2021.

At that time, the Federation emphatically stated the legislation if enacted is bad – especially since it will disproportionately and negatively impact many women voters, children and families that live in the underserved Wards of 7 and 8.

Unfortunately, Rank Choice Voting (RCV) legislation has the acronym of VOICE - but RCV's impact is the direct opposite of its name because it would have the effect of marginalizing, minimizing, and eliminating the voices of many District of Columbia residents.

1) Instead of voting for just one candidate from a list, as we normally do, Ranked Choice Voting allows each of us to vote for two or more candidates, ranking them respectively as first choice, second choice, third choice, and so on. It might make some peoples vote count more than others. This sifting process will continue until someone has a majority. The candidate who comes in first in the initial balloting may well lose when the re-sorting process is completed.

2) Our elected leaders pass laws that affect every aspect of our daily lives. But they derive their powers from a minority of Americans—those who show up. In DC that would be the more affluent sections of the city. This will provide an unfair advantage to selecting the candidate of their choice and enforcing policies that fit their needs.

3) It will have the direct impact of disenfranchising women and seniors who are our most stable source of voting strength and our recommendation is that the DC Board of Elections undertake a formal study to gauge the impact of RCV on District residents especially seniors before any preliminary RCV legislation is voted upon or implemented.

4) It discourages participation of infrequent and periodic voters, for example residents who typically vote in presidential elections.

5) RCV is unduly complex and is more costly than traditional voting yet it yields virtually no tangible benefits.

6) Without providing comprehensive education and training on the RCV process, it will end up confusing the electorate and leading some people of all social, economic, and educational levels particularly those that live in the underserved communities of Ward 7 and 8, not to vote at all, or to cast a spoiled ballot that doesn't count. In fact, a comprehensive training program is needed to meet the needs of everyone to understand it now before the Council vote.

The general population has not heard of it, don't know what it is, and have no idea of the impact it will have!

In conclusion on behalf of the Federation and the DCDSC, I strongly urge you to **not** to vote the Rank Choice Voting legislation out of Committee

1324 Kenyon St, NW, Washington, DC 20010

### DC Women in Politics Ranked Choice Voting Position Paper

DCWIP reviewed the current proposed DC Legislation for Ranked Choice Voting (RCV). RCV in multi winner districts is also known as the "single transferable vote". In this process, the ballot shall allow voters to rank candidates for each office in order of preference equal to the total number of candidates for each office; provided that if the voting system, vote tabulation or similar related equipment used by the District cannot feasibly accommodate choices equal to the number of candidates running for office, then the Board of Elections may limit the number of choices a voter may rank to no fewer than three (3).

DCWIP has concluded that the organization will not support the legislation for DC for the following reasons:

- (1) Empirical studies have not been completed to determine the potential disparate impact on minority, women, and senior voters;
- (2) Literature reviewed suggests that the RCV is overly complicated and confusing, depriving voters of genuinely informed choices;
- (3) RCV began in the early 2000's and current data does not show it improves the equality of representation for women and minorities;
- (4) Although proponents of RCV state RCV discourages negative campaigning, there is no evidence that has been shown that RCV actually accomplishes this; and
- (5) There is also no proof to support the claim that RCV is the gold standard for effectively ending gerrymandering.

DCWIP reviewed the following literature discussing Ranked Choice Voting:

- Pew Research survey found that 34% of Republican voters and 32.5% of Democrats couldn't even name their own party's nominee for Congress; now voters are expected

to have five informed choices, in order of preference? FairVote, which supports ranked-choice, found that under RCV, the "...prevalence of ranking three candidates was lowest among African-Americans, Hispanics, voters with less education and those whose first language was not English."<sup>1</sup>

- Per the New York Daily New OptEd, "Seniors vote in higher proportions than others. However, in RCV jurisdictions with greater percentages of older voters, more ballot-marking errors occur. Improperly marked ballots are discarded likely to disproportionately disenfranchise senior voters."<sup>2</sup>
- In October 2019, Gov. Gavin Newsom vetoed a bill that would have allowed more California cities, counties and school districts to adopt RCV. "I am concerned that it has often led to voter confusion," he said, "and that the promise that ranked-choice voting leads to greater democracy is not necessarily fulfilled."<sup>3</sup>
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DC COMMITTEE OF THE JUDICIARY & PUBLIC SAFETY

COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

BILL24-0372, THE VOICE AMENDMENT ACT OF 2021

HEARING, NOVEMBER 18, 2021

SUBMITTED BY DAN WEDDERBURN, 202 333-7171, 3539 T  
STREET, NW,

“RANKED CHOICE VOTING – SOLUTION TO A PROBLEM THAT  
DOES NOT EXIST IN DC”

DC is on the verge of completely replacing its existing voter system. This is being done with hardly any knowledge of the voting public or dissatisfaction. Seven of the thirteen City Council members are -co-sponsoring legislation to replace the current voting system. For decades voters have chosen one candidate for mayor, 13 councilmembers and recently, its Attorney General in the Primary and General Elections.

Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) would require that winners in each election receive a majority (50% + 1). Most winners in these elections already receive not only a majority but well over 50% such as in its 2020 and 2018 elections.

The few instances in which winners do not is when elected officials resign or lose elections due to ethical lapses or in elections for two independent Council seats that Congress requires due to the Home Rule Act. No state has this requirement.

RCV has many problems. It is a voting system used sparingly in several states and some cities over many years. It is hardly new. It began in the early 1900s but ceased to exist by 1945. Currently, only two states (Alaska & Maine) use it statewide as do as do about 10 cities in a few other states.

RCV is complex to understand, with confusing procedures, even for seasoned voters. The DC Board of Elections would need two years or more after Bill enactment to provide extensive education to all voters to learn these procedures.

Counting the votes using RCV can take upwards of a month. DC's existing voting system has its results typically between 10 and 11 PM, only hours after the polls close at 8 PM. In the widely publicized New York City's first use of RCV last year, it took 29 days after polls closed to determine the winners.

The legislation provides two years or more after enactment to prepare to implement RCV in DC, which is intended in 2024. This is to educate each voter in its complexities so that all voters can learn how to rank up to five candidates in each elected position prior to their votes. The Elections Board cannot possibly reach or require all voters to do this.

Under DC's existing system, none of this is required.

RCV would create a disparate impact, particularly on minorities, seniors and the disabled, and may violate the DC Human Rights Act, inviting protected litigation.

To conclude, DC already consistently elects most winners in its city elections, thus negating any need for RCV. Further, only two states do so as well as a few cities. Moreover, the history of RCV use is not encouraging due to its elimination after few years of use.

DC voters are accustomed to and overall satisfied with its existing system of voting. The need for RCV imply does not exist.

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#### SOURCES:

- Fair Vote
- Ranked Choice Voting Resource Center
- National Conference of State Legislators -Legis Brief
- Ballotpedia



October 6, 2021

Councilmember Charles Allen  
Chairman, Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety  
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW Suite 110  
Washington, DC 20004

*Via E-mail*

Dear Councilmember Allen:

At a duly noticed, regularly scheduled meeting of Advisory Neighborhood Commission 3D (“ANC 3D”) on October 6, 2021, the following resolution was approved by ANC 3D with a quorum (6) present at all times.

ANC 3D urges passage of the Bill 24-0372, the Voter Ownership, Integrity, Choice, and Equity (VOICE) Amendment Act of 2021.

The VOICE Amendment Act of 2021 would amend existing DC law to require that a ranked choice voting system be used to select candidates for public office in any primary, special, or general election involving at least three qualified candidates, including write-ins. This includes races for President and Vice President of the United States, U.S. Senator, U.S. Representative, Delegate to the U.S. House of Representatives, Mayor, Chairman of the Council, member of the Council, member of the State Board of Education, and Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner. The VOICE Amendment Act of 2021 also requires that the Board of Elections conduct a voter education campaign to familiarize voters with the ranked choice voting system.

Ranked choice voting gives voters the power to vote for their favorite candidate and simultaneously rank their backup (2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup>) choices if they choose. In other words, voters are allowed to rank up to five candidates for a particular office in order of their preference. If a candidate receives a majority of first-choice votes, that candidate wins the election outright. If no candidate receives a majority of first-choice votes, the winner of the election is decided by an instant runoff. The candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated, and voters who selected that candidate as their first-choice will have their votes count for their second-choice. This process continues until a candidate receives a majority of votes.

A ranked choice voting system has many advantages. These have been demonstrated in jurisdictions across the country which have adopted the system, including Maine and New York City. DC’s political culture will facilitate similar, and likely more significant, benefits. Such advantages include:

*More Choice and values-based voting.*

Ranked choice voting frees voters to select the candidate that aligns with their values and community needs, not the one they deem to be most electable. Instead of focusing on “holding their nose” and voting for “who will win,” voters can consider candidates on their merits.

*Coalition building.*

Ranked choice voting incentivizes candidates to build diverse, community-centered coalitions instead of engaging in negative campaigning. Because candidates typically need second-choice votes to win, they are deterred from negative or divisive campaigning that could backfire and damage public perceptions.

*Diversity.*

Jurisdictions that use ranked choice voting tend to see an increase in the percentage of candidates of color running for office and an increase in the probability of women candidates and women candidates of color winning office. A system that uplifts diverse candidates is especially important in DC, which has no current Latino or LGBTQ+ state-level office holders.

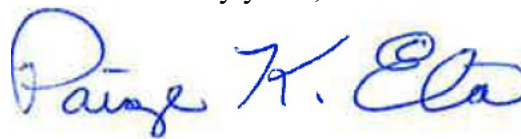
*Fairer, more equitable representation.*

Ranked choice voting uses a majority-wins system, leading to elected officials that better reflect the preferences of voters. In DC, the current electoral system does just the opposite. Too often, winning candidates garner far less than a majority of votes. In the 2020 election for DC Council At-Large, Councilmember Robert White and Councilmember Christina Henderson won only 25.96% and 14.77% of the vote respectively. The two winners were chosen among 24 total candidates. If ranked choice voting were used, the election outcome would likely better reflect the preferences of most DC voters.

ANC 3D urges the DC Council to support passage of Bill 24-0372, the Voter Ownership, Integrity, Choice, and Equity (VOICE) Amendment Act of 2021. We also urge Mayor Muriel Bowser to sign the legislation into law once approved and collaborate with the DC Board of Elections to adequately inform and educate the public about the ranked choice voting system.

Christian Damiana, Commissioner for Single Member District 3D07, is authorized to serve as the Commission's representative in all matters relating to this resolution.

Sincerely yours,



Paige Ela, Chair

cc: Members of the DC Council and staff

**Commissioner Ben Bergmann (ANC 3D08)**

**Written Testimony regarding B24-0372, the Voter Ownership, Integrity, Choice, and Equity Amendment Act of 2021**

*[Yellow Highlighting indicates portion used during oral testimony]*

Good morning,

My name is Ben Bergmann. I am an ANC Commissioner in ANC3D and I am testifying this morning in support of B24-0372, the Voter Ownership, Integrity, Choice, and Equity Amendment Act of 2021. Although I am testifying in my personal capacity, I do want to highlight that ANC3D unanimously endorsed this bill earlier this year.

Formally, we are discussing a bill, an ordinary piece of legislation like any other currently pending before the Council. But in reality, we are discussing whether to amend our state's constitution. What do I mean by that exactly? Constitutions set the rules of the road, not for today or tomorrow, but for decades to come. And that is exactly what we are talking about today. This bill, if passed, will become a fundamental component of the architecture for our local democracy, shaping how we vote and who we elect. Together with the Home Rule Act and other laws, it will be an integral part of our constitution, which exists even if it isn't consolidated into a single document and titled "Constitution of the District of Columbia." So my challenge to you, as you think about this bill, approach it the way you would if you were a member of a constitutional convention. Don't just think about 2024, think about 2054, about a politics dominated by issues and ideas that we cannot predict and featuring politicians whose names we do not yet know—politicians who may not even live in the District right now (perhaps because they haven't been born yet).

The best constitutions are informed by local conditions, history, culture, everything that goes into making a place and its politics distinct and unique. As democracy has spread throughout the world, political science has learned one thing for sure: cookie-cutter constitutions are a bad idea. That's true of nations and also of states. It may make sense for us to have the same election system as Alabama, but it may not. To that end, I would suggest acknowledging the donkey in the room.

DC is functionally a one-party town. The most consequential elections in this town happen in June, not November. (The one exception—the two at large seats reserved for members of different party—just proves the point. Instead of ensuring the presence of at least two Republicans on the Council, which was clearly Congress's goal, DC's quirky at large system just results in the District holding a jungle primary dominated by Democrats forced to re-register and run as "independents." Until we win statehood, there is no path to change this absurd part of our politics, but by adopting ranked choice voting the Council can make the system more fair and less democratic.)

But just because DC is solidly Democratic does not mean that there are not strong divides in DC politics. From schools and policing to housing and tax policy, candidates present voters with

sharply different visions. In a one-party state, the value of ranked choice voting is less about eliminating general election spoilers and more about resolving the “crowded primary lane” problem. Just like the 2020 presidential primary, a primary contest in DC can feature multiple candidates that vie for the same “lane.” A lane that remains crowded can easily result in a candidate winning, not because they reflect the electorate, but because they were lucky enough to be the only candidate in their “lane” on Primary Day.

Crowded primaries with candidates sporting similar positions and appealing to overlapping constituencies put voters in a difficult and unfair situation. When faced with 2 or more candidates with similar views, do you vote for the one that speaks to you the most or the one that you think is best positioned to win? How do voters even make that judgment? Local elections are notoriously hard to assess given and published polls are far and few between. Voters shouldn’t have to become pundits and handicappers.

I would also urge you to think about the broader political context beyond DC. As we fight for statehood, we are not just fighting for representation. We are fighting for the right to be a laboratory of democracy, like the other 50 states, without having to deal with Congressional interference. It is worth reflecting on what that means. Being a laboratory for democracy doesn’t mean working in isolation. To the contrary, the key is to be cognizant of one’s role in the larger conversation. Adopting and implementing a good idea—like free pre-K—can impact citizens outside our borders by demonstrating to other states that this idea works. And being part of the early cohort to adopt a new policy is as important as being the first mover because it can create momentum that encourages other states to take a hard look and consider adopting the policy as well. Media coverage of the new policy bleeds over into neighboring jurisdictions, raising awareness and familiarity with the new idea among voters there. Washingtonians that vote using ranked choice and later move to another state will bring that experience with them and will likely be more open to supporting expansion of ranked choice voting to their new state because of their experience. This is how public education spread throughout the country in the nineteenth century. How no smoking in restaurants and public spaces went from novel to the norm across the country. By adopting ranked choice voting, DC would join Maine, New York City, and several other localities in serving as demonstration projects for the practice.

As the number of jurisdictions that adopt ranked choice voting grows, familiarity and comfort with it will also grow, smoothing the path for its introduction in other states, including closely divided “purple” states. That latter fact makes what you are deciding all the more consequential. Yes, you are deciding how we will vote and elect leaders in the District, but you are also participating in a larger conversation about how we can strengthen our democracy as a country. Don’t lose sight of that. Don’t ignore or discount how ranked choice voting could impact elections in neighboring states and beyond. To take an example, the Republican Party’s presidential candidate has won the White House three times since 1992, but only once—2004—did they win the popular vote. In 2016, Donald Trump’s margin of victory in Wisconsin, Michigan, and Pennsylvania was smaller than the share of the vote captured by third-party candidates. In 2000, George Bush “won” Florida by 537 votes. The Green Party’s nominee received nearly 100,000 votes. Would we be better positioned in the fight against climate change if Florida used ranked choice voting in 2000? Would we have invaded Iraq? How many

Americans and Washingtonians would be alive if Hillary Clinton had been president when COVID came to our shores?

Adopting ranked choice voting will not solve all of our country's democracy problems, which is why we need Congress to act on democracy reform to rein in voter suppression, gerrymandering, and other abuses, but expanding the use of ranked choice voting for statewide elections beyond Maine will lessen the unfair impacts of the electoral college and the over-representation of rural states in Congress.

It isn't surprising that so many Democratic activists are hopeful that ranked choice voting will become more widely adopted, particularly in battleground states that determine control of Congress and the White House. Given this dynamic, it is, frankly, embarrassing that the leadership of DC's Democratic Party have lined up to block ranked choice voting. What is the purpose of a state party in a jurisdiction that has never supported—never come close to supporting—a Republican for federal or statewide office? It's a good question. In other states, state parties focus on winning contested elections, helping candidates fundraise and position themselves to beat Republicans, and building the infrastructure to turn out the vote in order to win marginal seats. None of that is necessary in DC. At a bare minimum, I would have hoped that the state party would not actively try and derail an election reform that, if it were to succeed in spreading to purple states in the years to come, could greatly improve the fortunes of Democratic candidates for the presidency and Congress.

I would urge you to ignore their opposition and support a bill that will be good for DC and also good for the country as a whole if DC's adoption can help fuel the growing momentum behind ranked choice voting across the country.



# **Testimony of 4D04 Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner Zachary Israel**

## **Council of the District of Columbia**

### **Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety**

#### **Public Hearing on**

#### **B24-0372, the Voter Ownership, Integrity, Choice, and Equity (VOICE) Amendment Act of 2021**

*Thursday, November 18, 2021*

Chair Allen and Members of the Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety:

Thank you for holding this important public hearing today on the VOICE Amendment Act of 2021. My name is Zach Israel and I represent Single Member District 4D04, which includes parts of Petworth and Brightwood Park in Ward 4. I am testifying today in my own capacity as an individual Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner and not on behalf of ANC 4D. I will also note that I previously served as the DC Young Democrats' National Committeeman and served on the DC Democratic State Committee.

I fully support the VOICE Amendment Act and urge the Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety to hold a vote and pass this critically important legislation as soon as possible. This would allow the full Council to pass the bill and subsequently allow the DC Board of Elections even more time to educate DC voters ahead of the June 2024 primary when the new ranked choice voting (RCV) system would be put into practice.

The fundamental question we should all ask ourselves is whether it's fair, in a democratic system of governance, to allow a candidate to win an election without receiving majority support from the electorate? The answer should be a resounding no. Simply put, candidates should not continue to be able to win elections in DC with a small plurality of the vote.

The VOICE Amendment Act offers a solution to this problem by allowing voters to rank up to five candidates from President down to ANC Commissioner, in order of their preference. That's it. Assertions by opponents of this bill that this new system will be overwhelmingly complicated is simply not accurate nor is it based on any evidence or fact. Additionally, the legislation would establish a voter education campaign to be conducted by the Board of Elections. The Board will be required to prioritize outreach to seniors and low-turnout precincts as part of its public education efforts.

The benefits of RCV are just as diverse as the candidates who are empowered to run under this system. Candidates are incentivized to campaign positively to appeal to the supporters of other candidates as a backup preference. It reduces fears of vote splitting and the "spoiler effect," where similarly positioned candidates split a pool of voters and permit a third candidate with less broad appeal to win by plurality. Further, data increasingly shows that in all jurisdictions that use RCV – including New York City,

Minneapolis, and San Francisco – voter turnout is modestly increasing, and races are more dynamic and collegial with genuine policy debates supplanting negative campaign tactics.

Most of the arguments against the VOICE Amendment Act are simply based on conjecture, not facts.

I urge this Committee to support the VOICE Amendment Act and ensure DC has a democracy that truly reflects the will of DC voters.

# **Zachary Parker's Testimony for the Judiciary Committee Public Hearing on B24-0372 Voter Ownership Integrity Choice and Equity (VOICE) Amendment Act of 2021**

November 18, 2021

Hello Chairman Allen and members of DC Council and the Judiciary Committee. My name is Zachary Parker and I am the Ward 5 Representative on the DC State Board of Education. I'm testifying today to offer my perspective on the debate around the VOICE Act and ranked choice voting in DC.

So many neighbors are checked out of politics because they see that the system is fundamentally corrupted and leaves them with no real choices. I hear all the time that "all politicians are the same". We need to make it easier and more meaningful to participate and trust in our democracy. Building trust means improving our civic education AND changing the system itself to better reflect the will of the people and bring the process of decision-making closer to the people.

I have been very concerned by the misinformation and confusion being sown about ranked voting, and see some of it as a typical ploy by some in power or who want to regain power to preserve a system that has worked for them.

That said, the skepticism I have heard from some older Black residents in Ward 5, in particular, gives me pause. More engagement and education is needed to make sure that changes to our voting systems include the voters who have built this city and our local democracy. I'm heartened to hear that the new legislation includes an equity-focused education campaign, but we need to strengthen it and invest deeper in civic education and action every year so our people not only know when an election is, but feel empowered and informed to participate.

While I believe Ranked Choice Voting has value as a way to give voters more choice, I believe there is much more education work needed in the District to get voter buy-in on this change.

A compromise I would propose would be to pass the VOICE Act with an amendment that will put it on the ballot and let the voters have the final say about changing our voting system. This is not actually that controversial of an issue because most residents do not have an opinion. The Council should act to take this to the voters so that education and buy-in can happen in the way that it's happened elsewhere - through the ballot.

I also want to use this opportunity to say that we do need to expand and transform our democracy so that it can truly work for the people. I propose a larger vision for Expanding Democracy & Fighting Corruption. We can pick up where the national Democrats have so far fallen short and create an "HR 1 for DC" - a forward-looking, comprehensive plan to expand democracy and civic education, including some ideas I've heard from community members:

- Make it easy for our students to not only learn civics, but do civics by making an advocacy campaign part of our middle-school social studies curriculum.
- Expand the number DC Council members to distribute power in the District, reduce the incentives for corruption, and ensure our elected body is more representative
- Make testifying at DC Council more accessible for working people by standardizing the process across Committees and having a system of text reminders so residents do not have to be on Zoom for their entire day
- Improving and standardizing constituent services across the Council
- Let permanent residents and 16 and 17 year-olds vote in local elections
- Empower ANCs through expanded support and accessible technology
- Implement stricter regulations on independent political expenditures so that candidates aren't able to get help from outside and big money behind the scenes and end up abusing the Fair Elections Program

These are just a few ideas I've heard, but I think it is critical that the Council uses this moment of disillusionment, lack of trust, and systemic change to bring DC residents closer to their government. We can restore trust if we do deeper education and make the system more responsive. I look forward to having this conversations with you all in the coming months and years.

Testimony of Caroline Petti

on

B24-0372, the “Voter Ownership, Integrity, Choice, and Equity Amendment Act of 2021”

Council of the District of Columbia     Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety

November 18, 2021

Thank you for the opportunity to offer my views on the question of whether to replace the District of Columbia’s current plurality-based system of electing candidates with Ranked Choice Voting. B24-0372 the “Voter Ownership, Integrity, Choice, and Equity Amendment Act of 2021” would require Ranked Choice Voting in DC beginning with the 2024 elections.

Before we make a wholesale change to our current system, we need to ask: First, is the current system so imperfect that it needs to be replaced and second, is the system proposed to replace it a superior one? I think RCV fails on both counts.

First, on the question of whether our present system is so imperfect that it needs to be replaced: I think the answer is “no”. Many of the problems raised by RCV proponents - lack of diversity in candidates, negative campaigning, too little genuine policy debate - simply don’t characterize DC politics. Furthermore, many of the benefits attributed to RCV - positive campaigning, collegiality, genuine policy debates, increased voter turnout and the end of strategic voting - are mostly speculative. There simply isn’t much data or experience and what little there is is often inconclusive and uncertain as to whether the experience would apply in DC.

The most compelling argument in support of RCV is that it would eliminate the problem of candidates winning with very small percentages of the total vote. RCV may fix that problem, but ... at what cost?

Increased voter confusion owing to having to rank a multitude of candidates is one.

But, more serious - most serious - is the disenfranchisement that occurs when voters - for whatever reason - stop voting after their first vote. Unless the voter’s first choice wins with more than 50% of the vote, under RCV, the race is decided by future rounds of second, third, fourth and fifth choice candidates until some one of them wins a majority. If a voter stops voting after their first choice candidate, their voice doesn’t count in any subsequent vote-counting rounds and they’re effectively disenfranchised. Under the VOICE Act, when you don’t rank a candidate, it’s called an “undervote”. An undervote does not count for any candidate and shall not be used for purposes of calculating the winner. Undervoting will happen a lot. I’ve done it. We’ve all done it. It’ll happen even more under RCV and studies have shown that undervoting is most pronounced among low-income voters of color. This is a fatal flaw with RCV and one that is so fundamental to the system that it can not be fixed with legislative drafting.

In summary, our current system is far from perfect, but I’m not convinced that it’s so broken that it needs to be completely replaced. I’m also not convinced that RCV is a superior replacement. The arguments for RCV are thin and the “cure” appears to be worse than the disease. I urge the Council not to support the VOICE Act.

Jose Barrios  
202-643-9545  
jbarrios9396@gmail.com  
November 18, 2021

### **VOICE Act/Ranked Choice Voting DC Council Testimony**

Good afternoon Chairman Allen and members of the Judiciary committee, my name is Jose Barrios. I'm the current president of the DC Latino Caucus. I'm delivering personal remarks as you have already heard from Ms. Castaneda who provided testimony in favor of the VOICE Act on behalf of the DC Latino Caucus.

I'm testifying today as a proud life-long Democrat that has worked tirelessly to elect Democratic candidates, and as a Latino who has all too often seen DC candidates skip over our immigrant communities in their campaigns because nothing in our current system encourages them to engage.

Under that system, we have a city where candidates plot how they can eke out a bare plurality victory by targeting this ward but not that ward, one side of the river but not the other, perhaps more White votes and fewer Black and Brown ones. You just need enough votes, sometimes less than 25%, to just squeak by with one more vote than your opponents. At a time where our democracy and voting rights are threatened across the country, this is no way to run city elections under small-d democratic principles. I would like to live in a city where candidates strategize how to win a solid majority of voters' ranked choices in every corner and every ward of this city.

Because let's face it—when was the last time a citywide candidate for office in DC ran campaign ads in Spanish, or targeted door knocking in our immigrant communities? The current system of voting doesn't seem to need DC's Latino voters despite Latinos being 11% of the population. Watch that change when candidates must garner 50% or more of voters' ranked choices, rather than winning with a small percentage. Personally, I can't wait.

Concerns raised about undervoting and voter turnout among lower income, minority, and immigrant communities in the District are valid equity issues that must be addressed, but they long preceded RCV. The VOICE Act provides a new opportunity to redouble our efforts in aggressively promoting accessible, ubiquitous, multi-lingual voter education so that residents fully understand their ability to vote for one or more candidates by order of preference, and encourages them to vote. Those who are concerned with low voter turnout and participation should join me and others in the DC Latino Caucus to help make that happen.

RCV encourages a more robust democracy by forcing candidates to campaign city-wide on platforms that will appeal to a wide range of the public, and by empowering citizens to rank their choices instead of being forced to choose just one candidate. RCV is good for the District, because it will require strong candidates who can find ways to win solid majorities across the city in coalitions that include Latinos and immigrants based on the strength of their ideas. And maybe then we'll finally get a Latino DC Councilmember.

Thank you.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Rob Hofmann, I am a resident of Ward 1 and I am also a member of Sunrise DC, in which I co-lead our efforts related to the Defund MPD Coalition. I am submitting testimony today to discuss the importance of ranked choice voting in strengthening democratic participation in the District and maintaining Black and Native Washingtonian voting power.

From 1980 to 2010, the average annual household income (adjusted for inflation) increased in Adams Morgan from \$73,000 to over \$172,000. In that time, Adams Morgan went from 51% white to 68% white. Using terminology from the Urban Displacement Project, Adams Morgan's development has gone past gentrification and is leaning into racial exclusion, a dynamic that has been seen across the city, but it is quite acute in Adams Morgan.

Ranked choice voting lets communities vote for 'backup choices' without harming their first choice. [This has historically led to more women and people of color running for office and being elected to office](#). A 2021 study by FairVote found that candidates of color earned more vote pick-ups in the round-by-round counting process than white candidates on average and that in RCV elections, candidates of color pay no penalty when competing against other candidates of the same racial or ethnic group. [Data from New York City](#) showed that when voters of all races, ages, and backgrounds tried a ranked voting system: they understood it, used it, and liked it.

Recently, we had an incredibly contested at-large race, in which the winner received 14.8% of the vote. This is also the same councilmember who introduced the VOICE Act, so I need to express my appreciation for her in this case. But, we are seeing Ward races with more and more candidates, which is a positive sign for a healthy democratic process. However, this also means we must develop a better voting system that accurately reflects the desires of the majority of the District's population, rather than a slim plurality. Additionally, ranked choice voting encourages the development of diverse coalitions and reduces the negativity and bitterness caused by vote splitting.

While ranked choice voting would not solve the issues caused by gentrification and racial exclusion in the District, it is proven that this voting system allows more BIPOC to run for office and succeed in being elected. It is my hope that this will help empower District residents to fight against the decades of worrying trends surrounding District residents being forced to leave their homes due to increasing housing prices and middling wage increases.

Thank you for your time.

# **Sam Bonar's Testimony for the Judiciary Committee Public Hearing on B24-0372 Voter Ownership Integrity Choice and Equity (VOICE) Amendment Act of 2021**

November 18, 2021

Hello Chairman Allen and members of the DC Council and Judiciary Committee. I'm Sam Bonar, Ward 5 resident, lifelong Democrat, Co-Director of Delicious Democracy (DC's Creative Advocacy Lab) intersecting culture and politics to build a politics that feels good to be a part of. I'm also a co-member on the Steering Committees of Rank the Vote DC and More Voice DC. I've been bugging all your offices about ranked voting for years now, so I'm sure it comes as no surprise that I'm testifying in support of the VOICE Act.

Our current politics does not reflect our people. When I walk the streets and talk to neighbors in Wards 5 and 8 about political issues, I'm continually humbled by just how little political circles actually understand how politics works. Most folks don't vote because people who would represent them are not considered "electable" or "winners". When people decide to vote and be a part of our democracy, people do not fit cleanly in binary camps of "for" and "against", "moderate" or "progressive", no matter how much journalists, entrenched politicians, and opponents of the VOICE Act who have sown division and spread misinformation might claim. Most people also don't fit cleanly on a spectrum line somewhere in between the binaries. People are infinitely-dimensional, but our system and the society that reflects it forces people to be small and pick sides instead of being in conversation.

Our system feels so fragile, and our culture of fragile egos, divisions, binaries, and zero-sum thinking is a reflection of that.

Ranked voting is an example of Delicious Democracy because it is about making a choice that is right for you, not right for whoever is considered electable. For me, ranked voting is less about the percentages that people win with, than it is about changing the culture of politics. It is not a revolution or an existential threat to everyone who knows and benefits the current system, it's just a good idea that opens up a new way of doing politics that asks, "What's possible?" instead of just "who's right?" or "who's winning?"

***Ranking lets folks vote for their actual favorite choice AND rank their backup choices if they'd like, knowing that if their first choice is in last place, their vote automatically moves to their next choice. And that keeps going until someone gets a majority of the vote.***

**When you explain it simply like that, from the voters perspective (not the Board of Elections's perspective) - people across the city get it. Everyone has different ideas about how to improve our democracy, but if you are actually trying to educate**



**instead of confuse and scare, people get what ranking means and what happens to their ranked vote.**

**And to those who offer up tweaks to the VOICE Act or other changes that we should make - I welcome your advocacy and partnership on this.** I'm open to blanket (not open) primaries with top 4 general (or maybe top 2, although I think that again limits choice too much). I'm open (and very excited about) the possibility of expanding the DC Council, but I hope it would be done in a way that makes things more representative and brings legislators closer to the people, not make a second legislature that only will slow things down and make civic engagement more confusing and obscure for newcomers. I also think we need to completely overhaul our civic education and engagement processes so that it's easier to testify at Council hearings and make it part of our education system to do advocacy around legislation or budgets each year.

**If folks are concerned about voter buy-in, I would also be open to the compromise of having this committee add an amendment to the VOICE Act so that it would go for final approval to the general election ballot.** If you're worried about education, let the voters decide.

**Whatever we do to improve our democracy, and I hope the VOICE Act is a part of what we do, I hope that it is something that expands our conversation, not makes us smaller and more divided in false binaries and spectrums. We're not saying ranked voting is the end all be all and fixes all the issues. It's just a good idea that should be the start of a larger conversation about how we will build the future of our city.**

I also want to use this opportunity to say that we do need to expand and transform our democracy so that it can truly work for the people. I propose a larger vision for Expanding Democracy & Fighting Corruption. We can pick up where the national Democrats have so-far fallen short and create an "HR 1 for DC" - a forward-looking, comprehensive plan to expand democracy and civic education, including some ideas I've heard from community members:

- Make it easy for our students to not only learn civics, but do civics by making an advocacy campaign part of our middle-school social studies curriculum.
- Expand the number of DC Councilmembers to distribute power in the District, reduce the incentives for corruption, and ensure our elected body is more representative. **I think it's critical that this happens without adding a new legislative chamber** - this would be another barrier to prevent things from getting done and making the process more complicated and hard to participate in.
- Make testifying at DC Council more accessible for working people by standardizing the process across Committees and having a system of text reminders so residents do not have to be on Zoom for their entire day
- Improving and standardizing constituent services across the Council
- Let permanent residents and 16 and 17 year-olds vote in local elections

- Empower ANCs through expanded support and accessible technology
- Implement stricter regulations on independent political expenditures so that candidates aren't able to get help from outside and big money behind the scenes and end up abusing the Fair Elections Program
- Explore innovative ways to make government spending and contracting more transparent using blockchain and other emerging tech, as well as reforming the process of competitive bidding to be more collaborative and reward good ideas and not just connections and existing resources

**Brianna McGowan**

**Judiciary Committee**

**Public Hearing on B24-0372, Voter Ownership Integrity Choice and  
Equity Act of 2021**

**November 18, 2021**

Good afternoon and thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Brianna McGowan, I go by Bri. I am a co-director of Delicious Democracy, one of the organizations in Rank the Vote DC. Rank the Vote DC is a local, grassroots, multi-racial coalition who is advocating and organizing to pass Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) in DC. I am also a proud resident of Ward 5, in the Edgewood neighborhood. I am here to speak on my experience organizing the movement for RCV in DC, my hope for the education campaign that is in the bill, and my enthusiasm for the fairer, more equitable system the VOICE Act proposes.

My organizing principles are to find the balance between being against systems that harm me and my community and proposing more desirable, more delicious, alternatives - towards joy! A system or culture that encourages expressing your full self is more desirable to me, and that's how I view ranked choice voting. We took this idea to our neighbors and friends. It started small, in our living room, and grew to over 300 advocates from all 8 Wards of the city, with 16 local organizations currently in our coalition (like DC for Democracy, Sunrise, We Act Radio, Working Families Party, DC Latino Caucus, and more) DESPITE a scary and unpredictable pandemic - which made organizing almost impossible at times.

But we have knocked on over 2,000 doors, tabled at farmers markets, and hosted virtual teach-ins. When people are approached about ranked voting, most folks have no idea what it is! So we always start with the problems of our current system (which you all heard in earlier testimonies) and present RCV as an alternative. People's reaction is typically "I like it!" or "seems like something that makes sense". We say "it's not the end all be all, there are many problems with our system. RCV is just a step in the right direction." People get it. People like it. The average voter appreciates having more choice!

What really threw me for a loop was when the DC Democratic State Committee decided to make this a priority issue - forcing people to grapple with RCV before even educating their members on the idea. Naturally, when you say "a change is coming and it's going to be forced down your throat" it's going to cause fear, confusion, and resistance. It has been a grave

disservice to not properly educate people in good faith. I am not angry or upset at people against RCV, because when I speak with them, I understand there is a tangle of confusion, and sometimes I am not always able to unweave the web. It used to keep me up at night.

I have had long phone calls, mostly with elderly folks, in their 70s, 80s, and some in their 90s, thinking that RCV is going to be the next Jim Crow. They used to tell me "Councilmember Bonds said that 'you progressives are coming for her again'" or that "if you just speak to Bonds..." I was at a happy hour once a few months ago, and someone, who clearly didn't know who I was, mentioned that Bonds needed the DC Dems to be against so she could have an excuse to vote against. The fear, the misinformation, the pain all trace back to a Councilmember who abused the power of their office to incite fear rather than lead, challenge, and educate. Councilmember Bonds, you are responsible for the trauma you have caused. It is not surprising though that the person who relies on vote splitting to win, sparked the misinformation campaign against RCV.

If The VOICE Act passes, I hope all councilmembers will embrace the system and be a part of the change to educate our voters, to prepare them for the power they will have under a ranked system - where even their second and third votes can make a difference. I hope the education campaign meets people where they are - knocking doors, having fun mock elections, and telling folks not to just "vote" but "how their vote makes a difference." Far too many people are mistrustful of our government systems - we need to bring back trust by giving people more choice and more voice. Pass the VOICE Act!!! The people of DC deserve better.

November 30, 2021

Council of the District of Columbia  
Committee on the Judiciary & Public Safety  
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20004

Chairperson Allen and members of the committee,

I appreciate the opportunity to testify on the VOICE Amendment Act of 2021. My name is Ahmad Abu-Khalaf, and I am testifying today in my personal capacity as a DC resident in favor of the VOICE Act. In November 2020, I was able to vote for the first time after becoming a U.S. citizen earlier that year. I was very excited to participate in the 2020 election cycle. However, choosing candidates to vote for under our existing majority voting system made me focus on candidates' electability so I'd choose the candidates who are most likely to win and avoid wasting my vote. This process captures a significant issue that exists within our existing electoral system, which forces voters to vote strategically based on candidates' electability, rather than voting based on their values and the policies they want to see proposed and enacted in D.C.

While I do not claim that enacting the VOICE Act would address *every* challenge in our existing electoral system, I do believe that this legislation, which would require using ranked choice voting (RCV) in all D.C. elections starting 2024 and invest in voter education, would enable us to significantly improve D.C.'s electoral system, a fact that is backed by non-partisan research. Enacting RCV is a proven and well-tested solution to make campaigns less divisive and less about targeted attacks. This is by incentivizing candidates with similar values and policy platforms to form coalitions to increase the chances of one of the coalition's candidates to win the majority vote. RCV also encourages candidates to think about how they can appeal as the second choice of their competing candidates' voting base, knowing they may need second and third votes to win. I believe this is a necessary step to reduce toxicity in elections and to make elections more about shared policy goals and less about egos. RCV is also a proven solution to ensure true representation in elections, by requiring that winners reach at least 50% of the total votes in the final round of votes count.

As a person of color who supports racial and gender equality, I am in support of adopting RCV in D.C., as research have shown that this electoral system often increases the odds of candidates of color and candidates who identify as women being elected. RCV also encourages more candidates of color and candidates who identify as women, especially young candidates and candidates with diverse socio-economics backgrounds, to run for office, as otherwise they would be concerned about splitting the vote, especially in a contested race. While there have been concerns about how RCV could discourage some voters from participating in elections due to its complexity, data analysis from NYC has shown that when voters of all ages, races and backgrounds used RCV in the last election cycle, they understood it and had no issues in ranking their votes. Additionally, the VOICE Act creates a voter education campaign that will be focused on D.C. areas with low voter turn-out, which would help increase voter participation in the District.

I urge the committee and the whole D.C. council to approve, enact and fully fund the VOICE Act to move from our existing majority voting system toward attaining the benefits of the RCV electoral system.

Sincerely,  
Ahmad Abu-Khalaf

**LISA D. T. RICE**

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November 18, 2021

Council of the District of Columbia  
Committee on the Judiciary & Public Safety  
Councilmember Charles Allen, Chairperson  
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20004

Good afternoon, Chairman Allen,

Committee Members and other Members of the Council, my name is Lisa Rice; I use she/her pronouns.

I am a Ward 7 resident and voter, now living in the home my husband and I renovated in 2015, which my father and uncles built in 1964. My son is an early literacy teacher in the DC public school system.

I was born and raised in Washington, DC, and over the last 60 years, have lived in Wards 6, 7, and 8. I first registered to vote when eligible to exercise the franchise at age 18. I have voted in every election held during the years I lived in DC. I've also voted in the Commonwealth of Virginia when I lived there for many years. I have lived in Boston, New Orleans, and New York City as well.

I'm here to speak in support of Councilmember Henderson's Legislation: the VOICE Amendment Act. Thank you, all, very much for your time today and for your careful consideration of this legislation and its adoption in the future.

Earlier this year, I moderated a debate at the Yale University's Jackson Institute of Global Affairs on the topic of RCV vs. Approval Voting. I am considered an expert in electoral reform.

A leader in the grassroots, national democracy reform movement and a political philanthropist, I serve on the Board of Directors of Unite America.

Unite America is a grassroots movement of Democrats, Republicans, and independents, working to bridge the partisan divide and foster a more representative and functional government.

At Unite America, we focus on four core electoral reforms, all non-partisan, viable, and powerful: Independent Redistricting; Open Primaries; Vote at Home; and Ranked Choice Voting. Regarding RCV, Unite America has invested millions of dollars to support campaigns for RCV in Alaska, Colorado (local), Virginia (local), Utah (local), New York City, Austin, and elsewhere.

In other words, electoral reform is not only a deeply personal matter to me, but also one that's at the top of my mind every day.

Ranked Choice Voting, which has been proven Constitutional, is easily explained and easily performed:

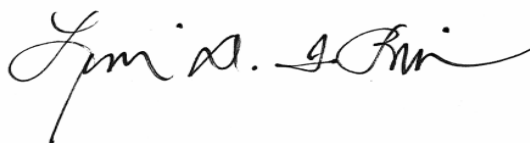
- From a *results* perspective, a candidate does not win unless they earn a MAJORITY (50% +1) of the votes cast.
- From a *voter's* perspective, if I'm able choose my favorite sandwich from a vast deli menu, WHICH I AM, I'm perfectly able to rank my vote in the voting booth.

The job of RCV isn't to encourage voters to come out to vote, as earlier, negative testimony suggested; that is the job of the candidates.

Quite frankly, I'm insulted by those members of the DC Democratic party - THE DOMINANT PARTY IN WASHINGTON -- who fail to see that their candidates are *not* energizing the people to come out and vote.

In conclusion, I am excited at the prospect of the introduction of Ranked Choice Voting to Washington, DC. I fully, STRONGLY support the VOICE Act and sincerely thank Councilmember Henderson for introducing this legislation.

Sincerely submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lisa D. T. Rice". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Lisa" being the most prominent.

Lisa D. T. Rice

Thank you Chair Allen for considering my remarks.

I testified on November 18, 2021 as neither supporting nor opposing the implementation of the Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) section of the VOICE Act. Having taken even more time to investigate the increasingly grandiose claims of its supporters, I am convinced that its implementation will be a waste of time and money that will have very little effect on election outcomes in the District of Columbia. I urge the Committee to exercise some degree of intellectual skepticism and to investigate these claims itself before taking them at face value. Surely the city with the highest infant and maternal mortality rate in the country can find better use for its money.

At the very least, I urge the Committee to follow New York City's example and to recommend a citywide referendum on the issue rather than relying on the testimony of a small number of supporters and opponents. I know that the referendum in New York City was necessary because a change in the city charter was required to institute RCV, but the referendum did confirm that the voters who participated supported RCV overwhelmingly.

The primary reason I now oppose the implementation of Ranked Choice Voting is that, except in less than 3% of cases, the outcome with RCV is the same as plurality voting. I offer the examples below.

In 17 years in the US, in only [3.8% of all races has the outcome for RCV been different from what it would have been under a plurality system](#), i.e., the leader in the first round of RCV won the election. In 16 of the 18 races that had a "come from behind winner", the second-place pick won. [In NYC 3 of the 63 winners won, courtesy of RCV](#), i.e., they were not in first place in the first round and won the election. Two of these were people of color who won over other people of color, so regardless of the system used, the winner would have been a person of color. The third was a White Republican defeating another White Republican. All three were in second place in the first round. So the RCV result as far as nominating people of color is concerned is exactly the same as it would have been under NYC's old voting system. And despite CM Henderson's hopes, electability was as much an issue as ever. Anyone other than the top two candidates could be considered a "spoiler".

Deas with "spoilers" were used under RCV similarly as under the old NYC system. ["Democratic mayoral nominee Eric Adams raised the specter of disenfranchisement when two close rivals — Kathryn Garcia and Andrew Yang — formed an alliance to encourage their voters to rank each other."](#) Adams almost lost the race.

I went back in the archives of the [Takoma Park MD elections](#) to the time when the city began using RCV. (I was unable to find the round by round results for 2020). I could not find one election where the results from RCV were different than they would have been under the plurality system, i.e., the winners in the first round of voting were the ultimate winners of the election. For the most part, the candidates exceeded 50% in the first



round and the contest ended, but even in those contests where there was more than one round, the candidate who was ahead in the first round still won. I

Many of the benefits being attributed to RCV in NYC such as increased turnout, more diverse candidates, etc. can also be attributed to public campaign financing, a new sense of social activism, curiosity, and a contested mayoral election. The primary turnout in 2021 was only 2.3% greater than 2019's pre-RCV turnout, despite CU's extravagant comparisons to 2013 cited in a previous post. [Fair Vote](#) has a list of studies that attribute both positive and no effects on turnout from RCV.

Finally, DC voters are very sophisticated. They will use any system as it benefits them and not as advocates, opponents, or politicians dictate. For example, the much-lamented undervoting for at large candidates is also used as a "[bullet voting](#)" strategy. Once the "rank an ice cream/beer/mumbo sauce" explanations stop and we start discussing how to game the system, voters will figure it out. And I think that just as RCV has not produced historic results significantly different from the plurality system, it won't make a big difference here.

I find it odd that an Act that purports to support majority rule is not being enacted by citywide referendum as it was in NYC in 2019 (passing with 75% of the 692k voters who expressed an opinion out of 5,270k voters registered [as of 11/1/19](#) ), but by the edict of the City Council bolstered by the "overwhelming support" of 119 live witnesses out of 519,912 registered voters ([as of 10/31/2021](#)).

The real injustice is that independent voters continue to pay for elections from which they are excluded in NYC (20% at 2/2/21) and in DC (16.5% as of 10/31/2021). I support non-partisan primaries in which the top candidates (2-5) proceed to the general election. Either allow all voters to participate in the elections they are paying for or make the parties pay for their own elections.

One can divide the votes into tenths and still not disguise the reality of partisan primaries and low turnout in both cities, in which the winning candidates advance to the general election thanks to less than 20% of voters in NYC and historically by 18% - 28% of DC voters. Those winning a majority have won with the support of 10% of registered voters in NYC and 9%-14% in DC. These nominees usually win in the general election.

In closing, I believe there are far more beneficial changes that we can make to our voting system to make it more democratic and will better justify our investment of time and treasure than implementing the "next big thing" without reviewing its promises

November 18, 2021

To: Charles Allen, Chair, Committee on the Judiciary and Committee members

***Re: Jeannette Mobley's Testimony Against the Voter Ownership, Integrity, Choice, and Equity Amendment Act of 2021***

Good afternoon, Chairman Allen, Committee Members and Staff,

My name is Jeannette Mobley, and I am a resident of Ward 5 and here before you today testifying as an individual in opposition of B24-0372 VOICE Act, which would implement ranked choice voting in the District of Columbia for the 2024 elections.

As you know the city has a reliable voting block of seniors in all eight wards. My Ward 5 has a large senior population in public and private senior housing, in Ft. Lincoln & Edgewood and other locations, assisted living facilities, group homes, not to mention over 20,000 seniors living in private homes such as myself. Moreover, many of our seniors have health related disabilities. We also have a large segment of residents whose English is not their first language. My concern is that there has not been any study done to determine what impact RCV may have for these voters who have relied on the historic method of the majority vote.

I want to be clear that we have seniors who can readily adopt to this proposed method of voting, but we must be concerned about those who cannot.

Mayor Elect Eric Adams told talk radio host Brian Lehrer on WNYC in New York City: And I quote

***"Your listeners, your New York Times readers, your Wall Street Journal readers, and all of those that had the ability to analyze all this information, it's fine for them," Adams said. "But that's not the reality when English is a second language, that's not the reality for 85-, 90-year-old voters who are trying to navigate the process. Every new barrier you put in place; you're going to lose voters in the process... I knew that was going to be a problem and it turned out to be a problem."***

I have also heard the argument that RCV will enable more minorities and under-represented candidates to be elected. This may be true for other jurisdictions, but not in DC. To the contrary, over the years, the Council of the District of Columbia has reflected diversity in race, gender, sexual orientation, and party affiliation.

This legislation is trying to fix a problem that does not exist in DC. While we do need to increase the voting in some areas, I do not think RCV will fix this. I much rather see the District of Columbia take the monies that it will cost to change out our voting machines and put it in affordable housing, job programs and drug rehabilitation facilities. Moreover, in a time when trust in election integrity is already low, we do not need a system that is hard to report and hard to comprehend. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

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Testimony for Public Hearing  
DC Council  
Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety  
Thursday, November 18, 2021

Chris Burroughs  
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Washington, DC 20010

B24-0372 — VOTER OWNERSHIP, INTEGRITY, CHOICE, AND EQUITY (VOICE) AMENDMENT ACT OF 2021

Thank you, Chairperson Allen, and members of the committee, for holding this hearing today. My name is Chris Burroughs and I live in Ward 1.

I am testifying in support of the VOICE act. Ranked Choice Voting is a modest, pragmatic reform, that promotes representative outcomes, reduces strategic voting, and improves the primary process of our political parties.

Ranked Choice Voting is good for candidates. Under the current “first past the post” system, candidates can be elected with a bare plurality and without securing a majority. Not unreasonably, the majority that voted against the winning candidate may feel they are not really represented. Ranked Choice Voting gives every winning candidate a majority mandate.

More importantly, Rank Choice Voting is good for voters. Under the current system, multi-candidate primaries and general elections are both unwieldy. Voters have to guess who might be “electable”, stomach the “lesser of two evils”, or worry that their vote will be “spoiled”. To the extent anyone can navigate this well, it favors the hyper-engaged with an abundance of time over working class citizens. Rank Choice Voting removes all that strategic complication. Citizens can just rank the candidates they really support.

Many alternative voting systems require advanced math to understand. Ranked Choice Voting does not. We express ranked preferences every day. Administration is also straightforward, no fancy math required. Virginia Republicans in their primary were distrustful of computers and so counted votes by hand just fine.

However, as a District voter I concerned by the self-defeating stance of the Democratic State Committee. Having strong consensus candidates emerge from the primary process with majority backing is good for both the Party and the District as a whole.

New ballots will inevitably feel different the first time. It is good that the VOICE act includes a voter education campaign. Dedicated funding for a larger campaign would also be appropriate. However, I am troubled by the insinuation that Americans in general, or District citizens in particular, are not smart enough for Ranked Choice Voting. Ranked Choice Voting is used by every voter in Australia, Ireland, New Zealand, and Scotland. Almost every other democracy uses a form of proportional representation that is at least as complicated as Ranked Choice Voting. We should be mindful of implementation costs but I believe District citizens are just as smart as everyone else.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Councilmember Charles Allen, Chairperson  
Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety

**B24-0372, The “Voter Ownership, Integrity, Choice and Equity Amendment Act of 2021”**

Thursday, Nov. 18, 2021

Testimony of Nat Cohen  
Washington, DC resident

Chairperson Allen and Committee members, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Nat Cohen. I am a DC resident for over 30 years, raising a family here.

I’m a Board Member for an international trade association. We recently needed to select the location for our annual meeting from among numerous cities that were proposed - Seattle, Las Vegas, Miami, Chicago, Nashville and so on. When we polled our members there was no clear favorite. So we polled them again using Ranked Choice Voting, which enabled us to identify the one city that had the support of the majority of our members.

Each year we also recognize one of our members with an award for their exceptional contributions to the industry. Nine people were nominated. We relied on Ranked Choice voting to ensure that award went to the person supported by the majority of our members.

We learned from the voting for the industry award that one of the nominees had narrow but strong support. This nominee received a large number of first place votes from her supporters, but she did not have broad support from the membership base at large. If we had chosen the nominee who received the most first place votes, she would have come close to winning. But when the preferences of all the members were tallied using Ranked Choice Voting, the strong consensus was that another nominee was more deserving.

Ranked Choice Voting is simply the best procedure, especially when there are multiple options, to ensure that the option selected is supported by most of those affected by the decision.

Today you’ve heard of the many advantages of Ranked Choice Voting including that it encourages candidates to build coalitions and to engage in positive campaigns rather than differentiating themselves by tearing down the other candidates.

I believe there is an even more powerful benefit from adopting Ranked Choice Voting. DC is holding elections with large fields of candidates where, due to a splintered vote, a candidate could easily be elected whose views were detested by the majority of voters and whose agenda was hostile to their interests.

As an example, let's say that the top issue in an election is whether to preserve or tear down a historic building. 75% of the citizens want to preserve the building while 25% want it torn down. Of the six candidates who are running, five favor preserving the building while only one wants it torn down. Yet if the five candidates in favor of preserving the building split the vote more or less evenly between them, they'll each receive between 10%-20% of the vote. The one candidate who is in favor of tearing down the building will receive the support of the 25% of the voters who want the building torn down - and will win the election despite championing a position in direct opposition to the vast majority of the voters.

This is a terrible flaw in the current voting system. There is no confidence that the winner of a large, split election actually has the support of the majority of the voters. Even worse, the winner could have an agenda that is hostile to the wishes of the majority. This is a defective way to run an election. It is obsolete and may lead to undemocratic outcomes. If a democracy functions best when its representatives reflect the preferences of a majority of voters, ranked choice voting offers this outcome, while the current voting method does not.

Ranked Choice Voting is simple, effective and strengthens our democracy. I urge its adoption.

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November 18, 2021

### **Ranked Choice Voting DC Council Testimony**

Thank you Chairman Allen and members of the DC Council's Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety. I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today to speak on behalf of the Voter Mobilization Initiative, a youth activist group that connects students across the DMV and beyond to engage in the community and advocate for issues we care about. As founder of the Voter Mobilization Initiative and current lead of the My School Votes DMV chapter, it is my pleasure and responsibility to speak before you all in support of the Voice Act.

From elevating minority voices to making city-wide elections more equitable and representative of our District as a whole, ranked-choice voting guarantees a slew of improvements to our election system that will remedy the pitfalls of our current process. The largest problem with its nationwide support is simple: people don't know what it is. Ranked-choice voting is gaining momentum across the country—as evidenced by the 29 states who are now seriously considering its implementation—but opposition lies in a sheer lack of comprehensive understanding about ranked-choice protocol.

Passage of the Voice Act and other ranked-choice legislation across the country a) promises *more* engagement with more choice, and b) also opens the door to dramatically reforming civic education at a young age. Even in this progressive blue bubble, I found through my campaign efforts that people across the District lack an in-depth grasp of a fundamental tenet of our democracy. For a country founded on democratic values, the fact that voter turnout is so low and that the voting process is not clearly taught in all schools runs contrary to the vision our founding fathers laid out almost 250 years ago.

Not only will this act's passage generate momentum to improve education across the *city*, but it will also set a precedent to be seen across the *nation*. With up to five choices, the Voice Act provides the opportunity for people to choose just one candidate (in the case that only one candidate speaks to them or they truly are confused by the ranking system) or up to *five* candidates (unlike Alaska's four candidates), which offers a diversity in options that caters to voters who, like most people, find more than one candidate appealing.

Given my position as school-wide head of the Student Action Committee and lead of My School Votes DMV, I am confident that passing the Voice Act will directly address failures of our current education system. As a student who can't yet vote but has long recognized the

importance of a secure democracy, it pains me to hold forums and converse with students nationwide who don't understand core elements of our government. On a non-partisan phone-banking session I held during the election last year, I was pleased to see students from Minnesota, Ohio, and California hop on Zoom with such great enthusiasm, but I was also shocked to see so many students misunderstand voting procedure, like how to register to vote and what it means to research candidates. This shock extended beyond the student volunteers I trained to the very people we called, many of whom had no clue how to check their registration status, find their local voting precinct, or request an absentee ballot. On both the youth end and the voter end, I experienced firsthand the results of a lack of civic education nationwide.

I gained the same insight when I continued to test various voter mobilization tactics: as I trained students nationwide to lobby for election protections and DC statehood, or dropped off postcard packets to youth volunteers to write letters to prospective BIPOC voters in swing states, or mailed absentee ballot brochures to senior citizen homes, or organized family friends in critical counties to cast their votes, I worked with hundreds of volunteers and voters whose voter education fell short of comprehensive. This lack of education is the exact reason why people are opposed to ranked-choice voting.

I remain in constant communication with students across the District, and we have started to build a cohort of students who will help to implement civic education curricula reform across DC public and charter schools. Once the Voice Act is passed, My School Votes DMV will begin working to incorporate voting procedure and election process teachings in nearby schools to make sure no one can argue that Washingtonians are ill-equipped to handle the complexities of ranked-choice voting. Ranked-choice voting is intuitive and more accurately expresses each voter's particular interests; teaching about ranked-choice voting will be a fairly simple task using one-pagers, PowerPoints, step-by-step guides, and lobbying trainings. The Voice Act's implementation promises further momentum to reform education and teach about civic engagement writ-large.

You will hear shortly from several of my classmates as they share a range of other reasons why ranked-choice voting is necessary—including the mathematical ease of ranking calculations and the intersection of RCV and climate change—but for me, the educational perspective is an incredibly persuasive one. I have benefited greatly from a comprehensive civic education, but I know that in order to make that experience accessible to students across the District, ranked-choice voting is the necessary plan of action. By channeling momentum from a new election system that also has such great other benefits into a platform for voter education improvements, Washington will elevate its status as a forward-thinking District with a new generation of voters who better understand the underpinnings of our democracy. Help us get to this point by voting yes on the Voice Act. Thank you.

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November 18, 2021

### **The VOICE Act DC Council Testimony**

Good afternoon to The Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety, and thank you for the opportunity to speak before you all today in support of the V.O.I.C.E. Act of 2021. My name is Anna and I am a sophomore at Georgetown Day School. By attending a school located in DC, I am surrounded with a community of largely DC students everyday, and as someone who won't be able to vote until 2024, I felt frustrated when discussing potential candidates in the 2020 presidential election with my peers. It felt that there were only two possible candidates to elect because other candidates were deemed "unelectable" against the stronger support systems of Joe Biden and Donald Trump.

During last fall's election, I phonebanked to mobilize voters of color in historically disenfranchised states and gained a newfound determination to combat voter suppression. This is why I support the V.O.I.C.E. Act to implement Rank Choice Voting by 2024. Rank Choice Voting is proven to create more voter turnout for these minority groups. Not only does this method encourage voters of color, but it helps candidates of color be more electable. A 2019 FairVote racial minority voting rights report showed that people of color have a higher rate of winning and holding office under RCV than under the prior system.

A recent example of RCV helping minority communities is how Asian American voters were mobilized by using ranked choice voting in the NYC Primary elections this June. The Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund released survey results of around a thousand Asian American voters in the primaries. This study revealed that ranked choice voting allowed them to vote for candidates that supported issues that directly affected their community without the fear of voting for someone "unelectable.", and 26% of these voters revealed that the top issue influencing their vote for Mayor was Anti-Asian Violence. I feel personally connected to this statistic as a member of the Asian American community, and I know that Ranked Choice Voting would benefit and uplift the voices of the Asian American community that exists here in the DMV.

I urge you to support the V.O.I.C.E. Act as I know that this will provide many opportunities for minority voters and candidates. I look forward to the day when I will be able to choose from a selection of candidates of many backgrounds, genders, and races, and to be able to choose not one but multiple for my vote. Thank you for your time.



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November 18, 2021

### **Ranked Choice Voting DC Council Testimony 4:47:25**

Good afternoon to The Committee on the Judiciary & Public Safety and thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of the V.O.I.C.E. Act of 2021.

Hello, my name is Shaila Joshi and I am advocating for the VOICE Act in support of Rank Choice Voting. As a student who is not eligible to vote, it is of utmost importance that this bill be passed. Climate change is a big issue that needs big resolutions, and with the VOICE act in place, Rank Choice Voting will allow those changes to happen. To focus on these measures to address and undo climate change, the United States needs to mend its broken democracy by getting rid of the division between political parties. The main way this will happen is with Rank Choice Voting, as it will allow people to vote for a candidate without focusing on whoever is the “lesser of evils.” In order to focus on the broken climate this country has put upon itself, our system needs to change for the better.

I will not be able to vote until 2025, and according to the New York Climate Clock, we have around eight years left until the carbon budget is exhausted. That means that only around three years after I turn eighteen, the climate will have reached a point of desperation. According to the United States Census, 22% of the country’s population is under 18, meaning a huge percent of the populace—and specifically the demographic that will have to deal with the impacts of a lack of current climate-related legislation—cannot vote. Climate change demands thoughtful, serious attention as well as action, and we can only focus on that once we have an established government that runs not only for people who can vote, but in focus of future generations who will soon be able to. In order to fix our divided democracy to allow for greater change in the country, the 78% of the people above 18 need to have this option to vote for candidates that they care about, without the fear of their electability or “wasting their vote.”

Focus on political arguments within the United States will always interest citizens rather than other issues; specifically in D.C., the center of political activity. Being surrounded by political discussions my entire life while living in this city has given me a slight glimpse into my future, that of which will be jeopardized by the lack of measures to hold off our environmental crisis. As a student, it is frustrating to witness our government falling short of its duties to aid our country and prepare it for its impending downfall. Our climate issue requires agreements between countries and political leaders to come to a thoughtful conclusion, the only one that can single handedly lower the inflictions the environment may pose. These agreements can only be reached

with a focus on that issue, rather than the broken relationships that prohibit any unity within this country.

Change the game, pass the V.O.I.C.E. Act to support Rank Choice Voting. Thank you for your time.

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November 18, 2021

### **Ranked Choice Voting DC Council Testimony**

Good afternoon to The Committee on the Judiciary & Public Safety and thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of the V.O.I.C.E. Act of 2021. My name is Ava Ginsberg. I'm a freshman in high school in the DMV area here to advocate in support of the V.O.I.C.E. Act. In a few years, I will be a voter and I am looking forward to being able to voice my opinions in politics and have my vote be counted. I'm excited to participate in our democracy, hopefully through the use of rank choice voting .

I believe that rank choice voting allows us to reach a more true form of democracy for several reasons. First, nowadays, it seems as if less and less voters are researching the candidates, or voting for who they really want in office; rather they may be putting down whoever their party has deemed most "electable". Rank choice voting encourages people to vote for the candidate that best represents them and may give a better chance for challengers or lesser known candidates to have their views heard.

Second, people elected to office are tasked with representing all of their constituents, whether or not they voted for them. In an election with no rank choice voting, you can end up electing someone with a very small percentage of the vote, many times much below 50%. Rank choice voting means that when someone is elected to office, they are always elected with a clear majority of voters wanting them in the position. This could, in turn, mean that they will be able to better represent their district, and will be more accurately able to understand the political ideals of the people they are representing.

Finally, rank choice voting eliminates the need for additional elections in the event there is no clear winner and the law has run-off requirements. Additional elections are costly and may put a burden on voters.

It is vital that the capital city enacts rank-choice voting in order to send a message to the rest of our country that rank choice voting is a more efficient and reliable way to run our democracy.

I strongly support rank choice voting and the V.O.I.C.E. act, I hope by the time I get to cast my first ballot, it will be with rank choice voting.

Thank you for your time.

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November 18, 2021

### **Ranked Choice Voting DC Council Testimony**

Good afternoon to The Committee on the Judiciary & Public Safety and thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of the V.O.I.C.E. Act of 2021.

My name is Delaney, and I live in Ward 3.

I will not be able to vote in an election until November of 2024.

When I vote, I want to be able to choose candidates based on their policy as opposed to focusing on whether or not they are “electable”.

Growing up in DC, I’ve been surrounded by conversations about politics from a young age. During the 2020 Presidential election I recall having conversations with my then 14-year-old peers regarding who they would vote for in the Democratic Primary. Among more broad ideological conversations, one recurring theme was whether or not a particular candidate would be electable against an incumbent president.

Even among 8th graders—who were not actually eligible to vote—our conversation centered more around who *could* be popular among the American people as a whole than which candidates we were *genuinely* excited about.

Ranked choice voting will afford DC constituents the opportunity to elect candidates that align with their views, rather than worrying about voting for who they think everyone else will vote for. By ranking five candidates, voters can be free from the fear that their votes will be wasted if they choose their preferred candidate. People are often hesitant to vote for independent and third party candidates, feeling forced to vote within the binary of a two party system in order to make their vote “count.” If no candidate gets more than half the vote and their candidate gets the least, their vote still makes a difference by going to their second choice. Candidates would have more incentive to reach out to a variety of voters in the interest of securing second place votes.

On a local level, ranked choice voting would allow Washingtonians to freely choose candidates who they feel best represent their community. This makes it more likely that a diverse group of constituents will be able to elect a diverse group of officials that can best represent DC. A more diverse group of candidates is also likely, due to the fact that candidates won’t feel pressure against running because of fears of splitting the vote.

When I vote, I want to be able to choose between a diverse group of candidates without worrying about my vote being irrelevant.

Please Support the V.O.I.C.E. Act. Thank you

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November 18, 2021

### **Ranked Choice Voting DC Council Testimony**

Hello and good afternoon, my name is Charlie and I am here to testify in support of the VOICE Act, which would implement ranked choice voting in the district beginning in 2024. I am a student at Georgetown Day School in Tenleytown and a resident of ward 1. As a student interested primarily in mathematics, ranked choice voting is a logical policy that directly follows when we accept the axiom that our government functions best if our representatives and the laws they enact accurately reflect the values and beliefs of the majority of voters (within a system of rights and checks and balances)

We all know that DC is a heavily Democratic jurisdiction and the Democratic candidate is almost always a shoe-in for the seat, thus the ‘real’ elections occur in June, when the Democratic primaries take place. However, primary elections see far lower participation than general elections: in 2020, voter turnout was only 28%, while turnout in the general election was 67%. This means that, by and large, our elections were determined not by a large, representative swath of the general population, but by a small group of engaged citizens, who are more likely to be older, whiter and better off than DC’s population as a whole. Further, those voting in the general election are presented with little choice, as many of them will vote for the democratic candidate who they might only somewhat agree with, for lack of better options. In a ranked choice system those representing different aspects of the Democratic Party, third party candidates, independents, all could campaign and present their solutions to voters, without the fear that they would detract from a “main” candidate or worry about splitting the vote. In short, ranked choice voting would allow for a broader ideological spectrum of candidates in general elections, giving a larger number of voters greater choice and ability to vote for candidate(s) who better reflect what they value and not ones chosen for them.

In at-large council elections, there has been a strikingly different issue—there was a wide range of candidates from various parties as well as numerous independents, but, as a result, the winners had only small pluralities. In a democratic election, ideally, the winning candidate should be the one that the majority of citizens can get behind. A ranked choice voting system would ensure that the winning candidate in crowded fields such as those in at-large elections best reflects the will of the majority of voters and not a slim plurality. Further it would do away with the need to vote strategically for a candidate more likely to win and allow voters’ ballots to truly reflect their honest political views.

Thank you for your time and listening to what I have had to say.

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November 18, 2021

### **Ranked Choice Voting DC Council Testimony**

Good evening to The Committee on the Judiciary & Public Safety and thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of the V.O.I.C.E. Act of 2021, my name is Nava Mach and I am a high school junior at Georgetown Day School. I'm a resident of the District of Columbia in Ward 3. I am also a soon-to-be voter. As someone growing up in DC, like many of my peers, I've been involved in politics at a very young age. I've bore witness to multiple national and local elections in which the candidates in question have set a polarizing divide in the political opinions of citizens. Why should it be the case where one has to settle for a candidate just so as not to stray from their registered party? We are told as a society to vote for "the lesser of two evils" or that someone is simply "not electable." When I turn 18 in less than two years, I want the freedom to vote for who I really believe in. Through the Voice Act, Rank Choice Voting would ensure that one can choose 5 candidates that they support instead of having to settle for a single person just for the sake of electability. This system ensures that groups who normally are disenfranchised in elections can voice their opinions without fear of splitting their group's vote.

As a child, when helping my parents fill out ballots, the list of choices for council and presidential candidates were overwhelming. "How could someone just choose one," I used to think. When I vote, I don't want to go through the emotional tax of narrowing down candidates when, in fact, I like a handful of them. Ranked choice voting will provide me, as a newer voter in the future and as a woman, with a list of candidates that I can personally connect with. It also offers more opportunities for women to run because the percentage of women candidates can increase dramatically and offer them more momentum in their candidacy. Even now, as someone who cannot vote yet, I understand the power that ranked choice voting provides to women and to voters in general.

Don't just take my word for it. In 10 states, 24 counties and cities have adopted ranked choice voting for local elections and 2 states use it for federal elections. The success in these states is promising for a better future of voting in DC. It also proves to help candidates that would be considered not as electable. Specifically, as someone who identifies as a woman, this makes me hopeful for female representation in politics. I am asking for your support to make history and pass the Voice Act because, as a student, resident, and future DC voter looking towards the future, I hope to actually be excited for what the ballot has to offer. Thank you for your time!



My name is Alex Busbee and I live in Ward 1. I would like to submit this written testimony into the record for the VOICE Act Hearing on November 18th. I am a registered Democrat, but I want to make one thing absolutely clear—the Democratic State Committee does not represent me on the VOICE Act.

As a Democrat, I believe in democracy. But I look around our nation and see that the right to vote is under attack. In times like these we must ask ourselves: How can we make it easier for everyone to vote? How can we make everyone feel like their vote matters? How can we improve the voter experience?

The answer—by passing the VOICE Act.

The DC Council was a national leader in passing public funding for elections. I applaud the council for having the courage to say that our city is stronger when anyone with good ideas and a desire to serve can participate in our elections, regardless of personal riches or wealthy friends.

The VOICE Act is the next step. As more candidates are able to run than ever before, one vote per race simply isn't enough. To encourage voters to participate, they must have the freedom to select multiple candidates and rank them.

You have the opportunity to once again make our city an example for the rest of our nation of what good governance looks like.

Democracy is fragile. This is why we—as Democrats, as Washingtonians, as Americans—must fight to protect and strengthen the right to vote for everyone. We have a duty to do this.

So I ask you, members of the DC Council, to seize this opportunity and pass the VOICE Act.

DC Council Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety

Written Testimony of Anne Cauman in support of B24-0372

Submitted December 3, 2021

My name is Anne Cauman. I live at 4405 38<sup>th</sup> Street, NW and am a resident of Ward 3. I am a member of the Executive Committee of the Ward 3 Democratic Committee. This testimony is in my personal capacity, but I wish to remind the Committee that the Ward 3 Dems strongly support ranked choice voting. I wish to thank the Chair and members of the Committee for giving me this opportunity to submit written testimony.

I urge the Committee (and later the Committee of the Whole) to pass B24-0372.

There are a number of reasons to favor ranked choice voting, but for me it really comes down to feeling that an elected official chosen by less than a majority of voters doesn't feel legitimate. It doesn't feel so bad when someone gets 40+% of the vote (even if I didn't want them a lot of other people did). But when someone gets something like 14 or 15% of the vote, why should they have the authority to make decisions about my life when not only I didn't want them but most of the voters didn't want them. Most recently, I have come to have a lot of respect for Councilmember Henderson, but was incredibly uncomfortable when she took office with a very small slice of the vote.

Having someone liked by a majority of voters even if not their first choice seems much more appropriate and like that person will be more likely to listen to what the voters have to say.

Thank you for your consideration.

Anne Cauman

Ward 3

[annecau@gmail.com](mailto:annecau@gmail.com)

202-363-3903

**PETITION**  
**WARD 3 ANC REDISTRICTING**  
**REJECT DIVISION OF TENLEYTOWN EAST OF WISCONSIN**

The undersigned strongly oppose proposals to divide the Tenleytown neighborhood east of Wisconsin Avenue between two ANCs. Such proposals separate commercial, institutional, and other uses from the residents who are most affected by them, leaving them no voice on decisions.

The plan proposed by ANC 3E would move to their ANC all of the nearby restaurants, the Whole Foods, the eastern entrance to the Tenleytown Metro, Wisconsin Avenue Baptist Church, Wilson High School and Pool and ANC JF's portion of Fort Reno Park, including the bandstand. ANC JE's plan takes only a one-block buffer of residents next to these commercial and institutional establishments, creating a situation where they will represent so few residents to the east of Wisconsin that those residents will have little voice. The ANC 3E plan severs the vast majority of residents to the east of Wisconsin from the activity on the Avenue and places them in a different ANC.

ANC 3E's plan, rather than use main through streets or avenues for boundaries as is done elsewhere, draws the boundary between ANCs along local neighborhood streets, which would divide the neighborhood and make many ANC matters very difficult to administer, such as parking and public space issues.

Finally, ANC 3E does not need to subsume part of Tenleytown east of Wisconsin to achieve the requirement that each single member district represent approximately 2000 residents. They are exercising a desire not a necessity. The ANC 3E proposal was revealed at the end of the redistricting process and should be rejected because it unfairly denies the opportunity for a fair hearing.

The ANC 3E proposal should be rejected by the Ward 3 Redistricting Task Force.

Name

Address

Janina H. Stanley  
Jeffrey Bailey  
Henry Houghton  
Rachael Weber  
Allison O'Connell  
Hilda Rivas

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To: Council of the District of Columbia, Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety  
Re: Testimony for hearing on VOICE act of 2021 to establish ranked choice voting in DC  
From: Emily Mechner, PhD  
Date: Thursday, Nov 18, 2021

Honorable Councilmembers:

Thank you for convening this public discussion, and for your thoughtful attention to the testimony of members of the public. I believe ranked choice voting will strengthen democracy and improve election outcomes, ultimately giving voters better public servants and drawing more citizens into engagement with the process of choosing them.

But I worry that reading dry and technical arguments on this subject might become tedious for you, so I would like to offer some insight in a humorous voice. In order to help you understand the motivations of RCV opponents, I would like to articulate the perspective of someone who does not especially want elections to identify the candidate who is preferred by the greatest number of voters. RCV elections privilege the preferences of voters over the needs of politicians. Let us consider who may be harmed by this approach, see through their objections, and better understand why we need ranked-choice voting.

For one thing, ranked choice voting can be unfriendly to incumbents. Granted, a popular incumbent who has the confidence and support of a majority of voters could win an election with ranked choice voting, but don't all incumbents deserve the boost from name recognition that they have earned through their service and their success in previous elections? If a majority of voters think an incumbent has overstayed their usefulness, but the opposition campaigns can't figure out who the best challenger is, why give voters a mechanism for figuring out at the ballot box who the replacement should be? It is unfair to bad incumbents to allow voters to gang up on them like that.

Second, political parties would be weakened by ranked choice voting. Don't voters need their parties to be strong and make the right choices for them? In our traditional election system, a party can make sure the right candidates run for its nomination in the primary. One that has dominant support can shut out the riff-raff who don't support the party's candidates from having a voice in the electoral contest. If a candidate can't appeal to the party base, why should they get help coordinating their opposition? It would be most unfair to the party faithful, the pillars of the establishment, to expose them to meaningful challenges from independents and fringe opposition parties. If votes can be transferred among less popular alternatives through a ranked choice mechanism, how can the party's favorite count on dominating the primary, let alone the general election?

It's hard enough for party stalwarts to fend off challenges from young upstarts and the more unorthodox elements in their own party! To adopt a system like ranked choice voting that encourages more challenges from populists, moderates, and other free thinkers would make it far too difficult to appease extremists or special interests and still keep your job.

Of course there are other ways to stand out, aside from being a party nominee or an incumbent. Another great strategy for getting elected in these multi-candidate contests we often have in DC is being different. If you stake out unpopular ideological territory, all the candidates who rush to curry favor with mainstream voter sentiment will split up the rest of the vote and you can win with a small plurality of supporters who agree with you. Ranked choice voting is so unfair to candidates who are original and

creative enough to find these minority pluralities. Just look at Donald Trump. He could never have gotten the Republican nomination in 2016 if the seven dwarves opposing him had been able to pool votes in opposition to his novel brand. Ranked choice voting would be a disaster for such visionaries. We may not have a lot of voters in DC who go for that Trumpist stuff, but the point remains: If there is an issue that divides people, and there are more candidates who embrace the more popular side of it, the maverick can divide and conquer. Ranked choice voting would totally spoil this strategy.

Still, issues aren't everything. What about the candidates who prefer a less substantive campaign style? Candidates should be able to run on simple fear of the opposition to dissuade people from giving their precious votes to bit players who want to raise minor policy quibbles. Voters should not be encouraged to waste their votes on candidates who promote niche issues but can't win. This would only encourage discussion and compromise, with more electable candidates being forced to address problems they have no interest in. Ranked choice voting would change the incentives for both candidates and voters. Where would we be without strategic voting and the personality politics it feeds? Do we really want a world where any obscure constituency and their pet candidate would have to be taken seriously?

If you want to oppose the tyranny of the voters, oppose ranked choice voting!

In brief, I hope that the august Members of this committee and the Council will give all due consideration to those that might be harmed by the adoption of ranked choice voting and the electoral strategies that would be disadvantaged by it—and back ranked choice voting!

P.S. The preceding satire was supposed to illustrate some of the perversities of our existing electoral system, in order to help skeptics understand what problems ranked choice voting is supposed to solve. If you found yourself agreeing with any of my feigned antidemocratic arguments, perhaps you should reexamine your position!

However, there is a weakness in the VOICE act, which is the limitation to five choices. In a contest with 8, 15 or 24 candidates, five may not be enough. For RCV to fully deliver on its promise, voters should be able to rank as many candidates as are running (minus one). Five is better than one, but as public financing of campaigns may tend to promote a proliferation of candidates, we may be seeing more and more elections where this limitation compromises the benefits of RCV. You might want to consider raising that cap.

An alternative way to make elections more tractable would be to reduce the field that stands for the general election through an open, nonpartisan primary. Sending only the top five or six primary finishers on to compete in the general election (and implementing ranked choice to choose among them) could do more to dispel voter confusion (or keep voters from being overwhelmed) than simplifying the voting process itself. Voters would have more time to acquaint themselves with each of the general election candidates. On the other hand, candidates would have to start campaigning earlier in order to be competitive in a primary, and newcomers might be disadvantaged by this. There are tradeoffs, but I personally would favor such a primary. I think the VOICE act would be improved by including it, but I support the VOICE act either way.

Some witnesses have raised the issue of undervotes in our at-large races as an argument against RCV. I find this objection incoherent. Undervoting in these races is clearly a result of poor ballot design and

weak voter education, and not a sign that voters are unwilling or incapable of voting for more than one candidate in a race. Do not heed this condescending and disingenuous argument.

I would also like to offer a comment on the idea, raised in the hearing, of a top-two runoff after an open primary (using traditional plurality voting). In the specific case of a race with three candidates, this method would be equivalent to ranked choice voting. But when there are four or more candidates, the results of these two methods would not necessarily coincide; the top-two system could easily produce election outcomes in which a candidate who is defeated in the primary would be preferred by a majority of voters to either of the top two finishers.

For an example to illustrate this, suppose there are three types of voters: 30% yellow voters, 30% blue voters, and 40% green voters. The greens occupy a position on the political spectrum that is between yellow and blue. If there are two (or more) green-aligned candidates vying for the votes of the green voters, they will all be eliminated in the first round of a plurality election, leaving a runoff between the two candidates representing the less popular, extreme positions.<sup>1</sup> In ranked choice voting, by contrast, one of the candidates in the green zone would rise to first place in the instant-runoff rounds by winning the voters of their more similar competitors, then gain the voters of whichever (yellow or blue) more extreme candidate is eliminated first, and win the election—the opposite outcome.

What is important to understand is that RCV does a better job of satisfying the preferences of the voters. In either the yellow-winner or blue-winner scenario, which would be the outcome of the top-two method, 70% of voters would prefer to switch to one of the green candidates if they could. Whereas when one of the green candidates wins, as in the RCV method, only 30% of voters would agree on preferring one of the defeated competitors.

This stylized example may be simple, but I think it illustrates a dynamic that is very common in DC elections, which is that the most popular parts of the political spectra attract many candidates, who do tend to split the vote. This can have a perverse effect on election outcomes, making it harder for those candidates to win who appeal most accurately to the values of the voters. Traditionally, political parties have provided an institutional mechanism for coordinating candidacies to avoid this kind of competition. It is obvious why the Democratic party establishment feels threatened by RCV; but ultimately democracy must take precedence.

Please pass the VOICE act.

*Emily Mechner has been a DC resident since 2003. She received her doctorate in economics from Harvard University in 1998, following undergraduate studies in economics and philosophy and political science. Her professional training included the study of social choice theory, including voting systems such as ranked choice voting. Dr. Mechner was a professor of economics at Bates College and worked in private consulting before leaving the profession to raise her three children. She welcomes correspondence: [emily@mechner.com](mailto:emily@mechner.com)*

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<sup>1</sup> This is not a fanciful or contrived example. There was recently an election just like this in Austria. The center-left and center-right parties split the country's (dominant) moderate vote, leaving the far-right nationalists and far-left greens facing each other in a closely fought runoff election.

**Testimony Bill 24-0372**  
**Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety**  
**Gloria Odom Stokes, Ed.D**  
**gostokes2001@gmail.com**

I am Gloria O. Stokes, EdD and have been a resident of Ward 5, Fort Lincoln Newtown Community, for almost 40 years. I oppose the passing of the Ranked Choice Voting/Instant Run-off Voting legislation proposed by the DC City Council. If approved this legislation will serve as the mechanism to elect city council representatives, mayor, ANC commissioners and other city representatives for the District in the future. Advocates for this type of voting system provide a two-fold goal: to better capture the will of the majority of voters and to combat partisanship. This method(system) of voting allows each voter to rank their top three candidates, from 1 to 3. Once the voting is complete, every voter's first choice is tallied. If one candidate receives over 50% of the votes on the first count they win the election. If no candidate reaches the majority threshold, the candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated. Then, everyone who listed candidates as their first choice will then have their second choice considered. This process continues until one candidate reaches 50% of the votes. Proponents provide the following benefits of this voting method.

:

- **Higher turnout.** Ranked-choice voting in general elections is associated with a 10-point increase in voter turnout.
- **Better capture of voter preferences.** Since each voter is allowed to express how they feel about more candidates, the outcome tends to reflect the choices of voters better.
- **Allows for more moderate candidates.** A candidate that has broad, cross-aisle appeal is more likely to win using a ranked-choice voting system since voters can express their preference for a more partisan candidate as well as the more moderate choice.
- **Lowers levels of negative campaigning.** Since each voter can potentially vote for a candidate as well as their opponent candidates shy from negative campaigning that would alienate the supporters of other candidates, instead trying to appeal to those voters as their second or third choice.
- **Put an end to campaign run-offs.** One added incentive for cities to adopt the system was that it ends the need for runoffs, which are costly and tend to have even lower turnout than already-low municipal elections.

Supporters assume that our current plurality/first-past-the-post system drives tactical voting and partisanship while not necessarily reflecting the will of the majority residents. Reason given, citizens sometimes wind up with extreme politicians due to a one-round election process that does not always reflect people's true preferences. Further, supporters are of the opinion that Ranked Choice Voting rewards candidates who command broad support and will lead to better results. In multi-candidate races, the winner is often the person with the most dedicated base, not the most widespread support. Moreover, it has been reported that the majority of voters do not always support the winning candidate, leaving much of the

electorate dissatisfied with the outcome and the winner with a dubious mandate to govern.

Both Republicans and Democrats have attempted to address that problem in presidential primaries with complicated delegate allocation formulas. Voters in Maine wrestled with this problem and thought they had found a simple solution: let voters rank their favorite candidates. Maine voters decided they wanted to become the first state in the US to implement ranked-choice voting. The ballot was approved and Maine voters were allowed in primaries and general elections to rank their choices for governor, congress and statehouse races. If no one gets a majority in a race, the candidate who has the least votes is eliminated and the second choices of their voters are redistributed in much the same way that a runoff election works. That process continues through multiple rounds until a single candidate reaches a majority. Maine became the first state to select Rank Choice voting statewide. It should be noted that Maine is a small, rural, homogeneous state.

This movement is not new, reformers of campaign voting began experimenting with ranked-choice voting in races for mayor and city council members in liberal-leaning cities like Portland, Maine; Takoma Park, Maryland; Cambridge, Massachusetts; Minneapolis and St. Paul Minnesota; and San Francisco, Oakland, Berkeley and San Leandro California. One added incentive for cities to adopt the system was that it ends the need for runoffs, which are costly and tend to have even lower turnout than already-low municipal elections. It was also reported that turnout in ranked-choice voting cities was nine or 10 percentage points higher than comparable cities in a primary or runoff election.

Not everyone is a fan of this voting method. Some opponents argue that the **system is too complicated**, especially in lower-profile races where voters already **have trouble distinguishing between candidates**. Another obstacle is that most of the District's voting machines aren't set up to count ranked-choice votes, much less perform the tricky calculations of redistributing second- and third-choice votes, therefore new voting machines must be purchased. This will be an exhaustive cost. It will be difficult to address differences between state laws and federal regulations and the equipment available to address ranked-choice voting for national elections. Moreover, there appears to be no consensus on how ranked-choice voting should be run in the U.S. with local governments disagreeing on the number of candidates a voter can rank and how to count the votes afterward.

Ranked-choice voting could have unintended consequences, for example, **ballot exhaustion** can occur. **This happens when voters either don't rank enough candidates or have all of their picks eliminated before the final round of counting.** **Another risk especially for independent candidates is that instead of Ranked-choice voting solving problems, ranked-choice voting could make it worse by encouraging more candidates to run.** The system a municipality selects affects the quality of candidates who decide to run. The proposed legislation the District is proposing allows 10 candidates to run for office. The number is definitely too high. Ranked-choice voting



may pose problems during presidential primaries because **party rules would have to change and individual states would have to implement it, so it's unlikely to happen anytime soon.**

As a resident of this city, I recommend that this proposed legislation be reviewed and based upon some of the obstacles that have been presented to reconsider and not adopt. And, out of courtesy to the residents of this city have a referendum allowing us to vote on the type of election system that meets our need.

I wish to thank-you for allowing me to testify.

Gloria Odom Stokes, EdD  
Resident of the District of Columbia

Nov. 19, 2021

Dear Councilmember Allen,

Greater Greater Washington supports B24-0372, the Voter Ownership, Integrity, Choice, and Equity Amendment Act of 2021.

GGWash's sectors of expertise are land use, housing, and transportation, decisions about which often entail some form of public engagement. We believe in better public engagement, which does not necessarily mean *more* public engagement.

Voting is the most basic and attainable form of civic engagement available to the majority of District residents (compared to, for example, public meetings), and we believe that ranked choice voting is demonstrably better than the District's current electoral system. We also believe that voters, who are already faced with near-incalculable permutations of options on their ballots at every election, are more than capable of understanding a new system.

Those who oppose ranked choice voting are, in our view, revanchist incumbents who are too cowardly to have their likely brittle grasp on power challenged in a forum as publicly competitive as an election.

Thank you,  
Alex

Alex Baca  
Policy Manager  
Greater Greater Washington  
[abaca@ggwash.org](mailto:abaca@ggwash.org)

Testimony on Ranked Choice Voting  
Submitted by Karen Zuckerstein

I am a strong supporter of ranked choice voting because I think it is an important tool for helping voters feel connected to officials that are elected. This in turn encourages greater participation in the electoral process and civic engagement.

A Report by the American Academy of Arts and Sciences titled Our Common Purpose: Reinventing American Democracy for the 21st Century, identified the advantages of rank choice voting. The report stated that the winner take all model of voting that we currently rely on presents serious shortcomings. In the case of plurality outcomes when votes are distributed among three or four candidates, the winner of the election may be a candidate who is disliked by a majority of voters. With a vocal minority able to impose it will over a more moderate majority, candidates are incentivized to appeal to the political fringes. The report identified rank choice voting as an alternative. Voters identify their preferred candidate but also their 2nd choice, 3rd choice etc. By reallocating votes, ranked choice voting allows for what is tantamount to a runoff election without the need for voters to show up at the polls for a second time. Elected officials are in the end chosen by a majority of voters. Because second and third choices matter, candidates have an incentive to speak to a broader group of voters and this can result in more moderate candidates and campaigns and greater confidence among voters that their votes are not being wasted.

The recent experience in New York City's mayoral primary highlights the benefits of rank choice voting. Few ballots were exhausted. -- only 15% of voters had inactive ballots in the final elimination round. Moreover there was a substantial increase in the number of voters in June's primary election compared to the 2013 mayoral primary. Nearly 1,000,000 voters participated in the June primary compared to 772,000 in 2013.

While many have argued that the system is complicated and this complexity will discourage participation, the numbers in New York tell a different story. Since elementary school (and probably before) voters have been asked to identify their first, second, third choices etc. Applying this behavior to the electoral process is not a radical departure from what people have been doing all their lives.

The larger voter turn out in New York indicates that ranked choice voting could be an important tool for increasing voter participation in DC.

12/3/21

Dear Chairman Allen, Councilmembers & staff,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony to express my support for the VOICE Act - B24-0372. The primary reason I support the VOICE Act is because it strengthens our democracy by giving DC voters more choice and voice. It also restores the power of our communities to shape how we are governed. As a registered Democrat, I do not feel represented by the small minority of loud dissenters on the Democratic State Committee, and I am disappointed by their opposition to a policy that would bring more democracy to the District.

Ranked choice voting provides more accountability and greater power for Black and Native Washingtonian voters, combating political displacement. In other places, such as Oakland, CA, we've seen how ranked choice voting can help maintain Black representation and lead to more women and people of color running for and being elected into office.

This is a powerful and exciting opportunity to structurally change the rules of the game to have more equity and more power for everyday people in DC. Please pass the VOICE Act!

Thank you again for the opportunity to submit my testimony.

Lauren Spokane  
Ward 4 resident and homeowner  
laurensokane@gmail.com

**B24-0372, THE "VOTER OWNERSHIP, INTEGRITY, CHOICE,  
AND EQUITY AMENDMENT ACT OF 2021"**

December 2, 2021

**Concerned Residents Against Violence (CRAV) statement  
opposing B24-0372 (Rank Choice Voting)**

This Bill has the appearance of disenfranchising Black voters because of RCV complexity. The turnout of Black voters, especially in wards 7 and 8, is low. To add this complication would only deter people. RCV would to some extent dispel the one person, one vote law. When numerous candidates run, RCV has the likelihood of producing more spoiled ballots. Of course, we are all guessing on the probability of what the outcome would be as it relates to voting correctly. However, the existing ballots are easier to understand, except when there is a referendum/initiative on the ballot, the paper ballots are two sided or the voting machine has candidates on more than one screen.

The District does not have run off elections because of the plurality voting process. The plurality voting method yields a clear winner. The plurality voting method does not have the appearance of a rigged election. RCV has the appearance of election trickery. When a candidate campaigns, he or she is campaigning to get the most votes, which to me is different from "ranking" at the top. One would have to campaign differently than they are campaigning now if we use RCV. With the RCV method, the person who should come in second could very well be the winner, which is unacceptable.

Moreover, we need to stop trying to make the District like other jurisdictions. We are the nation's Capital, therefore, should function as such by not following behind other jurisdictions; stop being a "copycat".

CRAV believes Wards 7 and 8 runs the risk of ballot exhaustion (In a ranked-choice election, ballot exhaustion refers to the share of ballots that do not continue to the final round of counting) because these two wards have an abundance of elderly people (those over age 65) and less-educated people (those without a college degree); ergo, disenfranchisement.

If the intent of RCV is for a candidate to win by a majority, RCV would not necessarily produce such a winner because after ballots are exhausted, the number of valid ballots used to decide a majority is less than the number of votes cast; again, disenfranchisement. CRAV wants everyone's vote to count.

We all know the many issues/problems BOE has during elections where many candidates will try any unethical act to win, especially in the wards that have less educated and many elderly voters, therefore, RCV would give those candidates another way to mislead voters. To count RCV ballots may be too complicated for the BOE to count accurately.

*Sandra "SB" Seegars*

November 11, 2021

To: Chair Committee on the Judiciary

**Written Statement Against the  
Voter Ownership, Integrity, Choice, and Equity Amendment Act of 2021**

Dear Charles Allen, Chair, and members

My name is Silvia Martinez, and I am a resident of Ward 4, Washington, DC. I am submitting my written testimony as the DC Democratic National Committee Woman, the Past President of the DC Latino Caucus, and a Professor Emeritus of Communication Sciences and Disorders at Howard University.

I wish to express my opposition of the **Voter Ownership, Integrity, Choice, and Equity Amendment Act of 2021**. There are several reasons for my position, for which I have postulated several questions.

- **Will the ballot be an election ballot or a cognitive test?**

Ranking and sorting are known in the behavioral and psychological sciences as a high-level cognitive skill. Rank choice is a sequencing task requiring children and adults to sort and sequence stimuli that are presented visually and auditorily. This task has a high correlation with short term memory (working memory), and other executive function (problem solving, planning, etc.) activities in the brain. As such the better your memory skills, the better you perform in these types of tasks. Working memory refers to the ability to 1) process information across tasks and modalities, 2) hold information in a short-term store, 3) manipulate information, and 4) hold the products of that manipulation in the same short-term store. The working memory conceptual workspace is an active system that forms a strong basis for information processing overall (Baddeley, 2002). Long term memory relies on the ability to transfer working memory content for use in the future. Because of the high correlation, many psycholinguistic and psychological tests rely on activities such as sorting and ranking to determine people's state of cognition. Using mental activities that require higher level cognitive tasks puts several voting groups at a risk at the voting booth. The groups that will have harder times exerting their voting rights include a) persons with learning disabilities who have difficulties with memory and processing b) persons who are older than 50 since these skills weaken as one grows older, c) the elderly for the before mentioned reasons, and d) and persons who have not gone to school and who have not had the experiences of using planning strategies as expected in this country, such as immigrants.

- **Will the election ballot be an election ballot or a literacy test?**

Literacy in the United States is 79% according to a 2019 report by the National Center for Education Statistics. 21% of American adults are illiterate or functionally illiterate. ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Literacy\\_in\\_the\\_United\\_States](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Literacy_in_the_United_States)). Document literacy is the knowledge and skills needed to search, comprehend, and use non-continuous texts in various formats. Manipulating tables and charts is an example. The skills required for success in document literacy is beyond the functional literacy level.

Rank choice ballots have been elaborated using various formats.

| Rank ballot by oval marks                                                                                        | Rank ballot by written names                                       | Rank any number of options in your order of preference. |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| Instructions: Fill in the first column oval by your first choice, second column oval by your second choice, etc. | Instructions: List the candidates in the order of your preference. |                                                         |
| 1 2 3<br><input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> Joe Smith                             | 1. <u>Ford</u>                                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Joe Smith                      |
| <input checked="" type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> Henry Ford                          | 2. <u>Hill</u>                                                     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> John Citizen        |
| <input type="radio"/> <input checked="" type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> Jane Doe                            | 3. <u>Doe</u>                                                      | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Jane Doe            |
| <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input checked="" type="radio"/> Fred Rubble                         | 4. <u>Rubble</u>                                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Fred Rubble                    |
| <input type="radio"/> <input checked="" type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> Mary Hill                           | 5. <u>Smith</u>                                                    | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mary Hill           |

Therefore, more than 21% of voters would, in fact, have problems using these systems to effectively vote. The persons at risk of low literacy include those with learning disabilities, the elderly, English language learners, minorities, and those who do not have any experiences with charts.


- **After the first vote, who are they really voting for?**

Voters come prepared to vote for their candidates and usually there are many seats they have to vote for. They are prepared to vote for one candidate per seat. Beyond what was explained about working memory before, the question that comes to mind is how people decide who to vote for. Political sciences has proven that people vote for those they feel represent them in attitudes, behaviors, and opinions about one or two issues. In essence they vote for people just like them. Once they have decided and voted on their one candidate, in rank voting the voter then needs to make other decisions that, as discussed before, makes great demands on mental processing. In lieu of available information to make choices, people will then choose at random. So, who would a person choose if they do not know the background of the candidates? Those who “look” like them....in writing. For example, a person named Smith will feel most comfortable voting for a Roberts than for an Afanador or Achebe because Roberts is a more familiar name. In essence, those persons with perceived “minority” names may be at risk of not being prioritized when doing random selections.

I urge you to vote against the **Voter Ownership, Integrity, Choice, and Equity Amendment Act of 2021.**

Thank you for the opportunity to offer my written testimony. Please feel free to contact me at 240-472-1049 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Silvia Martinez', is shown within a light gray rectangular box.

Silvia Martinez, Ed.D.  
DC Democratic National Committee Woman





**B24-0372 — Ranked Choice Voting and National Popular Vote**

December 2, 2021

Committee on the Judiciary (Judiciary@DCCouncil.us)  
District of Columbia Council  
Washington, DC

In 2010, the District of Columbia enacted the Agreement Among the States to Elect the President by National Popular Vote—often called the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact (§1–1051.01).<sup>1</sup>

The National Popular Vote Interstate Compact will go into effect when enacted into law by jurisdictions possessing a majority of the electoral votes (270 of 538). At the moment, the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact has been enacted into law by 15 states and the District of Columbia. These jurisdictions possess 195 of the 270 electoral votes needed to activate the compact. The other jurisdictions include 4 small states (DE, HI, RI, VT), 8 medium-sized states (CO, CT, MD, MA, NJ, NM, OR, WA), and 3 big states (CA, IL, NY).

There are two arguable ambiguities in the introduced version of B24-0372 that arise when the election of the President is determined by Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) and governed by the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact.

To eliminate the two arguable ambiguities (explained below), we request that you add the following recommended language to B24-0372. This wording is similar to what was enacted earlier this year by Maine (the first state to use RCV for President) upon recommendation of their Secretary of State.<sup>2</sup> The clarifying amendment in Maine was endorsed by FairVote, the Maine RCV coalition, and the National Popular Vote organization. The recommended wording below for B24-0372 is endorsed by FairVote and National Popular Vote.

**Additional new Section 8(i) to be inserted after line 158**

When the Agreement Among the States to Elect the President by National Popular Vote (§1–1051.01) governs the appointment of presidential electors, the appointment of presidential electors shall be as provided for in that Agreement, and the District of Columbia’s canvass and the Certificate of Ascertainment shall certify the number of final round votes received in the District by each presidential-vice presidential slate that has votes in the final round of tabulation conducted under ranked choice voting.

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<sup>1</sup> The District of Columbia’s enactment of the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact is found at <https://code.dccouncil.us/us/dc/council/code/sections/1-1051.01.html>

<sup>2</sup> The relevant portion of Maine’s recently enacted law is found on page 12 under “§803. Duties of Governor” at <http://legislature.maine.gov/legis/bills/getPDF.asp?paper=SP0450&item=3&snum=130>

## Explanation

Issues of interpretation in the election law should be settled before any presidential election in which the difference might matter, so as to avoid post-election litigation in which opposing presidential candidates argue for whichever interpretation benefits them.

The first arguable ambiguity in B24-0372 concerns the wording that specifies when a candidate is elected. Section 8a(d)(1) of the introduced version of B24-0372 says:

“If a candidate has a majority of votes among active candidates in a round of tabulation, that candidate shall be elected.”

This wording in B24-0372 is entirely appropriate for offices inside the District of Columbia. However, the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact provides that the election of the President of the United States shall be based on the total popular vote from all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Any possible misinterpretation can be avoided by explicitly reaffirming that the appointment of presidential electors shall be as provided for in the Compact when the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact governs a presidential election.

The second arguable ambiguity concerns which vote count the District would report in its official canvass and Certificate of Ascertainment. For reference, the District’s 2020 Certificate of Ascertainment can be found at <https://www.archives.gov/files/electoral-college/2020/ascertainment-washington-dc.pdf>. If left unclear, opponents could argue (as they did in testimony to the Maine legislature<sup>3</sup>) that only the number of first-choice votes should be counted. Such an interpretation would, of course, entirely negate the purpose of having ranked choice voting for President. In effect, B24-0372 would be asking the voters to mark up to 5 choices on their ballot, but all but their first-choice would be ignored.

This arguable ambiguity can be avoided by simply saying that when the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact governs the appointment of presidential electors in the District, the vote count from the final round of RCV counting shall be used.

The National Popular Vote Interstate Compact specifically empowers a jurisdiction using ranked choice voting to choose the way to report its presidential vote. The National Popular Vote Compact makes each state’s timely determination of its presidential vote count “conclusive” on the states belonging to the compact. Specifically, the Compact requires deference to each jurisdiction’s presidential count if it is finalized in an “official statement” by the “safe harbor” date established by federal law (i.e., six days before the meeting of the Electoral College). This official statement is typically the state’s Certificate of Ascertainment.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> The Save Our States organization testified before the Maine Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs. May 11, 2021 saying, “Regarding Ranked Choice Voting, the fact is that Ranked Choice Voting and a national popular vote are simply incompatible. Because under Ranked Choice Voting, a state can provide two different vote totals for one tally—the initial vote tally and the final vote tally.”

<sup>4</sup> The role of the seven Certificates of Ascertainment is specified by 3 U.S. Code §6, which states, “It shall be the duty of the executive of each State, as soon as practicable after the conclusion of the appointment of the electors in such State by the final ascertainment, under and in pursuance of the laws of such State providing for such ascertainment, to communicate by registered mail under the seal of the State to the Archivist of the United States a certificate of such ascertainment of the electors appointed, setting forth the names of such electors and the canvass or other ascertainment under the laws of such State of the number of votes given or cast for each person for whose appointment any and all votes have been given or cast; and it shall also thereupon be the duty of the executive of each State to deliver to the electors of such State, on or before the day on which they are required by section 7 of this title to meet, six duplicate-originals of the same certificate under the seal of the State; and if there shall have been any final determination in a State in the manner provided for by law of a controversy or contest concerning the appointment of all or any of the electors of such State, it shall be the duty of the executive of such State, as soon as practicable after such determination, to communicate under the seal of the State to the Archivist of the United States a certificate of such determination in form and manner as the same shall have been made; and the certificate or certificates so received by the Archivist of the United States shall be preserved by him for one year and shall be a part of the public records of his office and shall be open to public inspection; and the Archivist of the United States at the first meeting of

The fifth clause of Article III of the National Popular Vote Compact states:

“The chief election official of each member state shall treat as conclusive an official statement containing the number of popular votes in a state for each presidential slate made by the day established by federal law for making a state’s final determination conclusive as to the counting of electoral votes by Congress.”

Note that there is nothing new or novel about the National Popular Vote Compact’s deference to each state’s presidential vote count. The Compact’s wording mirrors long-standing federal law (3 USC §5) making each state’s determination of its presidential vote count “conclusive” when Congress counts the electoral votes on January 6.

Please contact us if you have any questions

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Yours truly,



Member, Board of Directors  
National Popular Vote  
Phone: 802-860-3933  
christopherap@gmail.com

Testimony of Michael Whelan

Bill B24-0372 the "Voter Ownership, Integrity, Choice, and Equity" (VOICE) Amendment Act Bill

November 18, 2021

I am writing to express my strong support for implementing ranked choice voting in the District of Columbia. As Councilmembers know, contested elections in the District are rarely a binary matchup between two candidates. In the past legislative cycle, more than twenty candidates ran for the at-large seat in the general election and eight candidates ran in the Ward 2 Democratic primary. Due to the large number of candidates, the winners of those races did not even garner 30 percent of the vote.

Fortunately, the winners of those races who now sit on this Council have proven themselves to be excellent councilmembers. I am satisfied with the result that we got. But that does not mean that process is unimportant or that democratic legitimacy can be ignored. Winning a race with less than a majority or even a strong plurality casts a pall over election results and leaves all sides feeling unsatisfied. Winners, who should be happy with victory, must defend themselves against charges of illegitimacy. Losers, who should gracefully accept defeat, are left wondering if the result would have been different with a different candidate mix. There are unseemly accusations that one candidate or another was a "spoiler" or that two candidates "split the vote".

All of this is even worse in ANC elections, which receive far less media coverage than Council races. At least Councilmembers know that their races were covered by local news. Endorsements by various organizations lend structure to the race and confirm to all parties that an election is being fairly fought in the public square. With such small districts and so many ANC elections occurring every cycle, a multiplicity of candidates can lead to winners who not only have less than a majority of the vote, but also win by very few votes in absolute terms. This was exacerbated by COVID. I ran for ANC this past cycle and I was reluctant to knock on doors due to the pandemic. I campaigned mostly through flyers, social media, and chatting with folks at the Petworth farmer's market. I was lucky in that only one other candidate ran for the seat. She defeated me by a large margin and absolute majority, fair and square. But if there had been three or four candidates, the result would have been less clear, and I'd be left wondering if the candidate mix was what determined the result, rather than the true will of most voters.

The bottom line is this: The number of candidates in a race should not determine its outcome. We should be encouraging all interested candidates to run, instead of making them worry about being a "spoiler" or splitting the vote. And voters should feel free to vote for who they want. As it stands, we must think strategically in the voting booth, worrying that a vote for our favorite candidate will elevate the one we like the least.

Please bring ranked choice voting to the nation's capital.

Many thanks,

Michael Whelan

4014 Kansas Ave NW

Thank you for the opportunity to offer written testimony and for your leadership on electoral issues citywide. I first want to thank the Committee of the Judiciary and Public Safety for taking up the VOICE Amendment Act of 2021 (B24-0372).

On the behalf of the Ward 3 Democrats, I want to state that we support the VOICE Amendment Act of 2021 (B24-0372), also known as Rank Choice Voting. The Bill introduced by Councilmember Mary Cheh, Grosso, Nadeau and Silverman and co-sponsored by Councilmember Allen that calls for adopting of ranked choice voting for elections of the Mayor, Attorney General, Council Chair, Council members, and State Board of Education members and other down ballot races.

The Ward 3 Democrats passed a resolution on July 23<sup>rd</sup> and sent to the committee of the whole on July 24<sup>th</sup>, 2020 at 12:46PM. In which four council members acknowledged they received the resolution stating the reasons why we support B24-0372.

Not to dilute our attached resolution but wanted to state a couple points on why we support ranked choice voting. (1) Because office holders elected by plurality may not enjoy the support or a mandate from a majority of voters, (2) Because ranked choice voting results in candidates and office holders who have won expressions of support from a majority of voters, and (3) Because second and third choices matter, candidates have incentives to build bridges to support of other candidates

I have also included with our written testimony, our resolution again that calls for the authorization and implementation of Ranked Choice Voting for primary and general elections in the District of Columbia and for the Presidential elections.

Thank you again for acknowledging our written testimony and we urge the Council to pass the VOICE Amendment Act of 2021.

Phil Thomas  
Chair of the Ward 3 Democratic Committee

Ward 3 Democrats

**Resolution in Support of Ranked Choice Voting**  
Passed 7/24/2020

Because our democracy is strengthened by an engaged citizenry whose participation in elections makes our public institutions more responsive,

Because DC elections, both primary and general, may include so many candidates that it becomes difficult—based on each voter’s top choice alone—for any one of them to secure a majority of the vote,

Because our current system of elections has sometimes led to the selection of candidates and election of office holders by a plurality (rather than majority) of voters,

Because office holders elected by plurality may not enjoy the support or a mandate from a majority of voters,

Because requiring a majority outcome through run-off elections is costly and participation is generally low,

Because ranked choice voting allows voters to identify their second and third choice preference (and so forth) and uses these preferences if no candidate wins a majority of first choice votes,

Because ranked choice voting results in candidates and office holders who have won expressions of support from a majority of voters,

Because second and third choices matter, candidates have incentives to build bridges to supporters of other candidates,

Because Bill 23-491, the Ranked Choice Voting Act of 2019—introduced by Councilmembers Cheh, Grosso, Nadeau and Silverman and co-sponsored by Councilmember Allen—calls for adoption of ranked choice voting for elections of Mayor, Attorney General, Council Chair, Council members, and State Board of Education members in 2022 (if feasible) and beyond,

The Ward 3 Democratic Committee calls for the authorization and implementation of Ranked Choice Voting for Primary and General elections in the District of Columbia and for Presidential elections. We support enactment of legislation that would implement Ranked Choice Voting beginning in 2022 (if feasible) and all subsequent elections.

The passage of this resolution authorizes the Chair of the Ward 3 Democratic Committee or the Chair’s designees to take action consistent with supporting and gaining passage of this legislation.

**Passed by:**

**THE WARD THREE DEMOCRATIC COMMITTEE**

Dear DC Council,

Voting is sacred. Ranked choice voting gives voters the full power we deserve. I know some people are concerned about learning how it works. I am a teacher here in DC, and I am fully confident in the human capacity to learn--and to continue learning throughout our lifetimes.

Let's commit to ranked choice voting, and let's get started with the process of educating our electorate about how to use this beautiful privilege to its fullest.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Fichter  
4525 Burlington Pl NW



Members of the Council -- and staffers working to support these proceedings -- thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Kit Conway. I am a DC resident here today to enthusiastically express my **strong** support for the VOICE Act. Thank you to Councilmembers Henderson, Allen, Cheh, Lewis George, Nadeau, Pinto, and Silverman for introducing this important legislation.

Ranked Choice Voting and the VOICE Act would help improve racial equity in the District and make the system more fair for communities whose voices are historically underrepresented under our current system. The VOICE Act helps with voter education throughout the District and ensures fairness in our often crowded primaries and general elections.

I note that DC Democratic Party leadership has testified today in opposition to ranked choice voting. As a proud DC Democrat, I want to make it clear to the Council that the testimony of these members of the DC Democratic Party do NOT represent me OR many of my fellow Democrats in the District. In fact, the DC College Democrats have come out in vocal support of Ranked Choice Voting and called on the DC Democratic Party to do the same. I agree.

With ranked choice voting, our elections would be more fair, equitable, and positive. Far too often in DC, crowded fields of candidates prevent DC voters' voices from actually being heard.

In addition to its popularity in New York City, I want to cite a recent report from the Salt Lake Tribune in Utah. A recent poll found that 86% of voters in cities and towns that used ranked choice voting were satisfied with the voting method. 81% said it was easy to use. 90% said the instructions for voting were clear.

If we want democracy to continue to flourish in the District, we need to be willing to make improvements when necessary rather than burying our heads in the sand. Please support the VOICE Act. Thank you for your time.

Kit Conway

Hi DC Council,

I'm so glad you're considering ranked choice voting for DC. I feel so strongly that ranked-choice voting will provide DC residents with the highest level of agency in our elections. Without ranked-choice voting, I feel compelled to vote for a candidate who seems most likely to win, to avoid a problematic outcome, rather than being able to choose who I affirmatively support. I am so excited that I may be able to choose who I affirmatively support without concern!

As for concerns about learning how ranked choice voting works, I believe other states' implementation of ranked choice voting shows that DC residents can learn what to do. We can teach our residents how it works.

Thanks for considering!  
Molly Silfen  
(AU Park resident)

Hi,

Testimony:

I am a registered Democrat in Ward 1 who wants to support rank choiced voting. Studies have shown it empowers voters, helps engage minority voices and is an improvement to democracy overall.

As a minority voter, I value these improvements to our democracy. Let DC continue to be a leader in forward, empowering legislation like this,

Adam Chamy  
Ward 1

Good morning,

I am a DC resident and I am a strong supporter of the bill B23-0491 - Ranked Choice Voting Act of 2019.

I like this bill because it gives DC voters more choices and improves our democracy. It discourages negative campaigning and encourages civility and bridge building among both candidates and voters.

In crowded elections in the current system, we can and have seen candidates win with a very low percentage of the overall vote. Runoff elections are not appealing either because they cost more money and many citizens will not show up to multiple elections. Ranked Choice Voting empowers voters and this bill is well-drafted to suit DC's needs and improve our local democracy.

I hope the Judiciary Committee holds a vote on this bill as soon as practicable; I think this is one of the most important reforms we can take to improve our elections and set an example for the rest of the country.

Thank you for your time and service.

Sincerely,

Zachary S. Ferguson  
616 E St NW  
Washington, DC

Dear Chair Allen and the rest of the Judiciary Committee,

I am submitting this written testimony in favor of prompt passage of the VOICE Amendment Act of 2021.

As Washington D.C. is the nation's capital, we should take a broad view. Democracy in America is under threat. I support Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) in general because it addresses systemic problems with U.S. elections at the city, state, and federal levels. We need to do our part in the District of Columbia by updating our city's voting rules using RCV. Proven in other large cities including San Francisco, Minneapolis, and New York, it is time to bring the benefits of RCV to Washington, D.C.:

- Without resort to strategic voting, voters will be free to vote their preferences in accordance with their values
- Without vote splitting, political leaders will be better incentivized to bridge diverse communities
- Without minority rule, winners will need to attract a majority of votes, creating more fair and equitable representation

More effective representation will lead to better solutions for DC's challenges. Not only must DC timely pass the VOICE Amendment Act of 2021 for its own benefit, our city should serve as a flagship example to other jurisdictions. DC and America urgently need electoral reform. Washington, DC as the nation's capital should be a leader in implementing RCV.

Thank you,  
Clark Cohen  
Ward 6

To The DC City Council Judiciary Committee:

I support Ranked Choice Voting because it is the best way to ensure full and meaningful participation in our elections. I urge you to support the legislation before you and send it to the full Council quickly.

Sara Green  
7106 Piney Branch Rd NW

Dear Council,

I am writing to encourage the Council to adopt the Voice Act Amendment that contains the RCV provisions.

Jon Samuels

Hello - I am a Ward 2 resident who strongly supports Ranked Choice Voting. People often lament having to vote for the "lesser of two evils". Were we to pass the VOICE Act, DC residents could prioritize candidates who better represent their values.

Sincerely,

*Max Broad*



Dear Members of the Judiciary Committee and Staff:

My name is Austin Naughton and I am a voter in DC Ward 2. I am writing to provide testimony about the VOICE Amendment Act and Ranked-Choice Voting. I have attended and participated in numerous discussions during 2021, including those hosted by the DC Democratic Party and its affiliate / ward groups as well as non-partisan organizations such as DC's League of Women Voters. I also observed [the November 18th Hearing](#).

- I am truly puzzled when it comes to points being made against Ranked-Choice Voting about "under-voting" being a very serious concern. For the most recent At-large Council race, I intentionally chose to vote for only one candidate. It had nothing to do with misunderstanding options. Thus, I would much prefer to have Ranked-Choice Voting in some form so that I would feel more free to rank a greater range of candidates.
- When people mention the numerous "Independent" candidates running for At-large Council positions here in DC, I think it is pretty well-understood that at least a few of those candidates were recently leaders with the DC Democratic Party. They chose to register at "Independent" so that they could run against the winner of the Democratic Primary. So, if opponents of Ranked-Choice Voting are concerned about voter confusion when there are multiple candidates, I feel like it is already "confusing" with candidates switching party affiliation in order to be able to run in certain races. This only reinforces my desire to have the option to rank the candidates, regardless of their party affiliation. For the 2020, At-large Council race, I believe there were at least 6 recently former Democrats running as Independents.
- I have experienced versions of Ranked-Choice Voting through organizations both as a voter and election volunteer, such as DC for Democracy and the Capital Stonewall Democrats (formerly known as Gertrude Stein Democratic Club. As an election volunteer at Democratic Party events, I have spent time at the ballot box table and observed some people showing up with their blank ballots and having no idea who was even running for office. They were just there to vote because people told them to come vote. In those situations, I would neutrally point them in the direction of the different candidates who were nearby or told them to look at the candidates' literature that was being distributed. Some other people would show up to vote even if they were registered in another jurisdiction or otherwise ineligible to vote in that particular election. I do not think that these issues would be greatly impacted by Ranked-Choice Voting - there will likely always be a wide range of high-information and low-information voters.
- In 2021, I happened to be in the NY media market visiting my parents during the period leading up to the New York City mayoral primary. This gave me numerous opportunities to bear witness to the election ads and public service announcements that were being shared on radio and television. The information provided was very helpful in explaining how ranking candidates would work. I asked my parents, ages 83 and 90, how they would feel about ranking candidates. They said that they would like to be able to do so. They made clear that it did not feel confusing to them.
- Related to the above, I offer such insights because I hear opponents of Ranked-Choice Voting indicating that certain types of voters (older people and voters with cognitive challenges) would find ranking candidates to be too complicated. I was a Special Educator for more than a decade, so I am relatively familiar with the experiences of

people with cognitive challenges when it comes to decision-making. My hope is that there will be resources provided to support voter education efforts for people who may face extra challenges understanding basic democratic processes.

- Finally, during 2020, I had numerous opportunities to engage with leaders of the DC Board of Elections through DC-wide planning sessions between the Primary and General Election. As chairperson for Ward 2 Democrats, I felt responsibility about being involved with such efforts to improve the voting process given the contested election in our ward. The Board of Elections demonstrated that it was able to learn from the challenges that had arisen during the primary election. Thus, I am confident that the Board of Elections should be able to adjust accordingly when it comes to working with new forms of voting, including Ranked-Choice Voting and that the DC Council will make improvements to the areas that may be confusing, such as how the vote-counting process occurs.

Thank you for the transparent manner being used to conduct this process related to Ranked-Choice Voting,

Austin Naughton Chisholm

Hello,

I am writing to support ranked choice voting in the District of Columbia. While claims have been made that "it is too confusing", in reality, people are doing it in other states and I don't think DC citizens are any less intelligent than people in other states. It's the only way to truly get "majority" support for a candidate. With 6-8 candidates in a field, it's ridiculous that the winner could walk away with less than 20% voter support.

Jacqui Lieberman

Council Members,

Please vote the VOICA Act out of committee. This Act makes DC's elections more democratic and more fully expresses the will of Washingtonians who are already so disenfranchised from Congress.

I feel the VOICE Act will generate more excitement, greater turnout for elections, and better debate among candidates.

Thanks for your consideration,  
Jason Forman

Hello and thank you for welcoming my testimony,

As a native Washingtonian and longtime Ward 5 resident, I am writing to express my enthusiastic support for the VOICE Act. The VOICE Act will create a more fair and equitable democratic system for Black and brown communities in DC, and will increase voter education in areas of low voter turnout to make our city's government more responsive to the needs of our neighbors. As a registered Democrat, the small minority of loud dissenters on the Democratic State Committee does not currently represent me. Our current system dilutes our votes and makes it difficult to hold politicians accountable. This has harmed and displaced Black and brown communities in DC. Ranking lets communities vote for backup choices without harming their first choice. Ranked choice voting has been proven to increase representation of people of color and women on the ballot, which can help combat gentrification and displacement in our rapidly changing city and ensure that our representatives look like the people who live here. I am so appreciative for your consideration and for the opportunity to change DC's democratic system for the better.

In solidarity,  
Ellie Bomstein  
Ward 5

Dear DC Council

I have been a DC voter since 2002 and have lived in three different wards (1,3,4) and am a frequent voter. Over this time, I have been enthusiastic about some candidates, but cast my vote for another because they were more likely to have a chance to beat the front runner. That is not how democracy should be. I choose to live in DC, instead of MD or VA, because I LOVE this city. Friends often ask me why I live here when I have no vote in Congress. I choose DC even though we have taxation without representation on the federal level.

I share that because voters in DC deserve to have full access to democracy. That's why we need rank choice voting in the District. I want all voters to be enthusiastic about a candidate and feel that their vote matters - even if their top choice doesn't win. At least that candidate had a chance. That's what Rank Choice Voting does.

The other week I heard a story on WAMU on the VOICE Act. An opposition argument was that it would limit ballot access for Black and Brown skinned voters because it would be too confusing. As a white person living in Ward 3, my gut reaction was that was a racist argument. So I checked into it just to see what the impact is on those communities. Of course, Rank Choice Voting does indeed only increase voter turnout in low turnout areas.

I could write a lot more about why Rank Choice Voting is needed, but I'll leave it at that so Council can get back to work and make our city accessible to more of our residents. So much needs to be done and having more engaged citizens will only make your job as Council easier to do the right thing for the people.

Thank you for your time reading this.

Sincerely

Brenda Barron. Ward 3  
4849 Connecticut Ave NW, Washington, DC 20008

Chair Allen and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony for your hearing on B24-0372, The Voter Ownership, Integrity, Choice, and Equity Amendment Act of 2021. I urge the Council to approve this important legislation.

American democracy is built on the premise of majority rule. But currently in D.C., the majority does not rule; instead, a plurality does. In some recent elections, candidates have been elected with well less than 50% of the vote. The VOICE Act would ensure that D.C. elections are won by the candidate who has majority support.

In addition, the VOICE Act would allow me to vote my true preferences without having to think about voting "strategically." In a contest with 3 or more candidates, under the current system of plurality voting, I might consider which candidate I guess to be most viable. But the VOICE Act would let me simply rank my honest preferences, knowing that if my preferred candidate comes up short, then my vote will be transferred to my second preference.

As a consequence, in contests with 3 or more candidates, the VOICE Act would incentivize candidates to appeal to the broadest array of voters. Candidates who want to earn not only first-choice votes, but also second-choice votes and so on, will be encouraged to expand their outreach across the electorate. We should aspire to a democracy that is as inclusive as possible.

Finally, I want to address the criticism that ranked-choice voting, as the VOICE Act would implement, is supposedly hard. I find that criticism to be an offensively dismal view of voters' abilities. In fact, we rank choices all the time. For instance, parents enrolling their children in DC public schools rank their school preferences on the My School DC application. If ranking choices is too hard to understand, we shouldn't use it for school enrollment either. But, just to the contrary, if the option to rank schools were *removed* from My School DC, I suspect that thousands of parents could complain to the Council that their choices were being limited. (Notably, under both the VOICE Act and My School DC, voters/parents are *not required* to rank more than one choice: if they only have one preference, they have the option to pick only that preference.)

In conclusion, I urge the Council to strengthen our democracy by passing the VOICE Act. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Gavin Baker

746 Kennedy St. NE

Washington, DC 20011

Good afternoon, DC Councilmembers. I am a Ward 3 resident and registered Democrat, and I'd like to voice my strong support for the VOICE Act to bring ranked-choice voting to the District.

I'm aware that a handful of DC Democratic State Committee members testified against the VOICE Act. As a lifelong Democrat, I want to make clear that those individuals do not represent me.

I have worked as both a volunteer and a paid consultant on many DC municipal campaigns over the past 10 years, including Ed Lazere, Elissa Silverman, Brianne Nadeau, and Janeese Lewis George. Like many other DC residents, I've seen patterns emerge and observed up close how the status quo isn't working for DC residents, and how ranked-choice voting could positively reorganize the incentives for candidates and office-holders.

Under the status quo, candidates for office in DC are able to win with a narrow plurality, particularly since the Democratic primary is often the de facto general election. Candidates who are women, Black, brown, LGBTQ+, or part of other marginalized communities are often urged not to run by community leaders for fear of "splitting" the vote. For those who do run, they have little incentive to build a broad coalition since they can win with as little as 15 or 20 percent of the vote. Instead, they raise money so they can attack their opponents, seeking to sufficiently damage them in order to squeak by in the final count.

The result is a system that is restrictive, nasty, and not representative of the will of DC voters.

Under ranked-choice voting, the incentives are flipped. Candidates are less likely to attack each other because they are seeking a 2nd-choice vote from each other's supporters. Candidates from nontraditional backgrounds bring new energy and new ideas to our political system without fear of "splitting" or "spoiling" the chance for representation for their communities. And the winners will be those who received at least a vote of approval, if not a first-choice vote, from a majority of voters

Ranking is natural and easy to understand. Those who oppose RCV for fear that it is "confusing" are underestimating the very voters who just shifted voting methods during a pandemic with minimal disruption. Surveys from jurisdictions with RCV show that the vast majority of voters understand their ballots.

I strongly support the VOICE Act and reject the attempts from a handful of individuals on the DC Democratic State Committee to keep a status quo that isn't working for us.

Thank you so much for your time. Please let me know if you need any additional information.

Doug Foote, Ward 3, 20008



## TESTIMONY

I am Hugh Allen, a registered voter residing in Ward 3 of the City. I am testifying as an individual.

I support the VOICE ACT and make the following recommendation for its potential implementation:

Please amend this proposed legislation to include language to support a plan and implementation strategy for robust voter outreach and education to explain the VOICE ACT to all registered voters in each ward of the City. Also, language will be included to require the City Council and Mayor to appropriate funds to pay for this voter education to explain the VOICE ACT to all registered voters in the City.

Submitted by  
Hugh Allen  
Registered Voter, Ward 3  
202-355-8432

Hi There

As a long time Ward 5 resident, I am writing to express my enthusiastic support for the VOICE Act. The VOICE Act will create a more fair and equitable democratic system for Black and brown communities in DC, and will increase voter education in areas of low voter turnout to make our city's government more responsive to the needs of our neighbors. As a registered Democrat, the small minority of loud dissenters on the Democratic State Committee does not currently represent me. Our current system dilutes our votes and makes it difficult to hold politicians accountable. This has harmed and displaced Black and brown communities in DC. Ranking lets communities vote for backup choices without harming their first choice. Ranked choice voting has been proven to increase representation of people of color and women on the ballot, which can help combat gentrification and displacement in our rapidly changing city and ensure that our representatives look like the people who live here.

I am so appreciative for your consideration and for the opportunity to change DC's democratic system for the better.

Thanks for your consideration of my passionate feelings,  
Alex Wigmore  
Ward 5 Resident

I'm writing to support ranked choice voting, which I believe will result in a consensus candidate in multi-candidate elections, rather than a minority choice.

The rise of public funding, which has resulted in a plethora of candidates in many races, makes ranked-choice voting more relevant than ever.

I am not concerned that ranked-choice will disenfranchise minority voters. I hope my optimism is not misplaced. Nor do I think voters will be confused — we all can count to five — or put off by the new system for other reasons.

I hope the bill passes.

Laura Richards, Ward 7  
Consistent Voter

Esteemed members of the Judiciary Committee,

I write today to request that you, my representatives, vote in favor of the VOICE Act. There are many reasons to support the implementation of Ranked Choice Voting in DC elections, but the most glaring one in my eyes is the need to insure actual majority support for our elected leaders. In 2020 alone, 4 out of the 5 elections for members of the State Board of Education the majority of people voted for someone *other* than the winner. In other words, only 1 out of 5 Members of the State Board of Education elected in 2020 actually had the support of a majority of the electorate. This is an obvious affront to our democratic ideals. In the 2020 race for an At-Large Member of the Council, the winner received the votes of only 25.96% of the voters. Perhaps Robert White would have proven to be the consensus pick of the voters, but we don't know because we weren't using Ranked Choice Voting!

Additionally, research has shown that RCV can increase turnout. Research [highlighted by FairVote](#) here found that "that ranked choice voting caused a 9.6 percentage point increase in turnout in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area. **The effect on turnout is higher for precincts with higher poverty rates.**" (McGinn, E. July 2020. [Rating Rankings: Effect of Instant Run-off Voting on Participation and Civility.](#))

Please don't buy the status-quo supporting fear-mongering that RCV will somehow lead to greater inequality in elections when it will do just the opposite.

Please make DC into a leader in much needed electoral reform and pass the VOICE Act.

Sincerely,  
Peter Cirincione, Ward 4 resident

I am a DC resident and voter. I strongly support B24-0372 and strongly support ranked choice voting for general and primary elections in DC. No voting system is perfect but ranked choice has important advantages over the current first past the post system, including:

- It reduces the chance that officials will be elected who are disfavored or less preferred by most voters simply because of splits among other candidates;
- It frees voters to vote for the candidate they think is best with much less worry that their vote will be "wasted" because some other similar candidate splits the vote. Rank choice voting does this by allowing voters to rank their preferred candidate first, while voting for "safer" less-preferred alternatives as second and third, etc. choices. Under the current system, thoughtful voters are forced to make guesses, often based on inadequate information, as to which acceptable candidate is electable rather than voting for the candidate they think is best.

Objections to ranked choice voting are invalid. It is sometimes suggested that voters will not understand the system. But almost everybody is familiar with the idea of making a first choice, a second choice, and so forth in situations other than voting and can apply the same thinking to voting. Some people will need experience to adjust to any new voting system, but that is a reason to adopt ranked choice voting as soon as possible so voters can gain experience with the system and the city can get the full benefits of it in future elections.

It is also sometimes suggested that ranked choice voting will favor some segments of the population or some areas of the District. But, in my experience, all segments of the DC population and all areas of the city have been able to produce multiple capable candidates for office--precisely the situation where ranked choice voting is needed to get the best electoral results.

It is possible that the current first past the post system favors incumbents or other candidates with better name recognition. But that is not a legitimate reason to keep a voting system forever. Moreover, if an incumbent or other person with name recognition has a genuine record of accomplishment, they are likely to do well in a system of ranked choice since some voters will rank them first and other voters who know their accomplishments will select them as their second or third choice backup candidates.

The Council should therefore adopt B24-0372

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*TESTIMONY BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY AND PUBLIC SAFETY  
COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA*

*ON*

**B24-0372, the “Voter Ownership, Integrity, Choice, and Equity  
Amendment Act of 2021”**

*November 18, 2021*

STATEMENT OF Monica H. Evans, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA BOARD OF ELECTIONS

Good afternoon Chairman Allen and members of the Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety and staff. I am Monica Evans, the Executive Director of the DC Board of Elections. As you know, the Board of Elections or BOE takes no position on pending legislation. I am here to discuss the impact the Voter Ownership, Integrity, Choice, and Equity Amendment will have on BOE. As recognized in the Bill, implementing ranked choice voting would require a well-funded, comprehensive voter education campaign. In particular, we would need to have several touch-points with District voters. Our communications plan would include in-person engagement and outreach, town hall meetings, and print media. We will request at least one FTE (full-time equivalent) staff person and additional financial resources to assist us with our outreach efforts. Messaging will be very important. Our website will contain explanatory documents and we will likely utilize a tool to walk voters through the ranked choice voting process with sample ballots and mock elections.

We will need to modify our ballot design and voting equipment to accommodate ranked choice voting. We would need to procure compatible software from a third-party vendor to accurately tabulate the results. Due to the nature of ranked choice voting, contests that utilize ranked choice voting will have delayed election results when no candidate receives the required number of votes. As we saw in New York City’s implementation of ranked choice voting, we may need to have several rounds of tabulation before a winner is identified. Therefore, we will need to proactively set the expectation. Election results will not be available on election night.

The legislation requires ranked choice voting for each contest with three or more candidates (including write-ins). Depending on the number of contests on the ballot and the number of contests with three or more candidates, our ballot could

be very long. In some instances, a ballot may be multiple pages. We also may not know the final number of candidates in a particular contest (and thus whether the contest is subject to ranked choice voting) until the final resolution of the nominating petition challenge period, which may include litigation.

In closing, Chairman Allen, I want to once again emphasize the fact that we take no position on specific legislation. As a customer service agency, BOE is committed to administering elections and delivering quality services to all voters. We seek to maintain the integrity of every election regardless of the process. I am pleased to answer any questions you may have at this time.